Commentary
May 2001

The Palestinians and the "Right of Return"

Efraim Karsh

Among the Gentlemen-Publishers
Joseph Epstein

Air-Crash Cover-Up?
Didier de Fontaine

Why Doctors Are Down
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ARTICLES

25

The Palestinians and the "Right of Return" ***Efraim Karsh***

The latest condition for "peace" is without basis in law or historical fact—and happens to entail Israel's self-destruction.

32

Among the Gentlemen-Publishers ***Joseph Epstein***

Is capitalism ruining the book trade, as two captains of the industry suggest?

38

Air-Crash Cover-Up? ***Didier de Fontaine***

TWA 800, Swissair 111, EgyptAir 900—and the U.S. military—all figure in the dark theorizing of a Harvard English professor.

43

Why Doctors Are Down ***Ronald W. Dworkin***

Managed care is the symptom, not the cause.

OBSERVATIONS

48

A Jerusalem Diary ***Yaacov Lozowick***

Reflections on the new *intifada* by a chastened Israeli dove.

ART

52

Fun with Paint ***Steven C. Munson***

The works of Wayne Thiebaud raise again the question of what was, and is, pop art.

MUSIC

57

What Killed Classical Recording? ***Terry Teachout***

The fall of the major labels is a story with a not altogether unhappy ending.

CONTROVERSY

14

Missile Defense ***Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. & Critics***

LETTERS

3

Medical ethics; England's decline.

BOOKS

61 Moral Freedom by Alan Wolfe *Midge Decter*

66 Troublemaker by Kathleen Burk *Richard Pipes*

70 Paradise Park by Allegra Goodman *John Podhoretz*

72 Newton's Gift by David Berlinski *Adam Schulman*

78 Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser *Steven A. Shaw*

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Commentary
May 2001

Letters from Readers

Bioethics

To the Editor:

Sally Satel and Christine Stolba are doubtful about the work of medical ethicists ["Who Needs Medical Ethics?," February], and count me among these characters, quoting an article I wrote some 30 years ago when I began working in the field. They blame me and others for "encouraging doctors to give full consideration to certain key principles in resolving clinical dilemmas," among them, the principle of autonomy, that is, gaining the consent of patients for medical procedures.

After three decades of following "the little party of doctors, nurses, and medical students to the bedside of very sick people" (as the authors quote me), I am more convinced than when I started that medical ethicists are doing some good. At the same time, I could not agree more with the authors' argument that doctors themselves are responsible for the patient's life and must make the tough decisions. They are correct to say that doctors must have the same abilities as bioethicists: creative problem-solving, listening well, communicating interest and respect, and distinguishing ethical dimensions of a problem from other overlapping dimensions.

But medical doctors need to be taught these skills. They cannot operate on their instincts, even good ones, in a complex world of technological and bureaucratic medicine. Bioethicists are principally teachers. By far the majority of us are employed as faculty in schools of medicine. We do not make medical decisions in any sense whatsoever. Instead, we help to place those decisions within the context of moral and religious beliefs, cultural attitudes, legal constraints, financial pressures, and historical precedents that may influence, often unconsciously, a physician's perception of the medical situation.

The authors relate several cases in which they see an ethicist's advice as outrageous or unnecessary. I might agree with their critiques, but I also know that such cases often occur in a context that can explain the ethicist's advice. Women have been coerced and imprisoned for endangering their fetuses; patients refusing treatment have been deemed insane on no evidence but their refusal; persons with a history of alcohol abuse have been removed from lists of transplant candidates. These are not simple questions to be resolved by the moral instincts of a good doctor. They require a thoughtful review of the circumstances of the case within a broad understanding of the nature of the problem.

Bioethicists are supposed to teach that broad understanding, and doctors are supposed to draw upon it to make informed, compassionate decisions. Far from taking anything from physicians, my colleagues and I have helped them to perform better their own responsibilities.

Albert R. Jonsen
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

To the Editor:

As one of the medical ethicists targeted by Sally Satel and Christine Stolba, I am glad for the opportunity to respond to their account of a case discussed in my recent book, *Genes, Women, Equality*. The authors describe my view of the case as "ideologically blinkered." After checking in the Oxford English Dictionary, I am happy to acknowledge that their characterization is correct.

The OED defines "blinkered" as "having a limited range of outlook." Because I am human and finite, my range of outlook is as limited as that of other finite humans, including Sally Satel and Christine Stolba. The OED defines "ideological"

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as "belonging or relating to the study of ideas" and as "occupied with an idea or ideas, especially of a visionary kind." Either definition captures the fact that my research and teaching as a philosopher have long focused on ideas, particularly on the idea and ideal of human equality or justice. This ideal necessarily includes gender justice.

After describing Julia Smith Andre's failure "to follow a restrictive diet to keep her child from having serious birth defects," the authors pronounce their "verdict on her behavior": "she violated her duty to her unborn child." This verdict, they claim, "would seem straightforward." Those familiar with further details of the case (discussed in my book, *Genes, Women, Equality*) might not agree. Among the unmentioned and potentially relevant details is the fact that the diet alone, consisting solely of fruits, vegetables, cereals, fats, and bread, was inadequate to support fetal development. In her first pregnancy, the diet had nauseated Julia, and her husband, an unemployed chef, detested its blandness. That pregnancy had produced a healthy daughter even though Julia had not been informed of diet recommendations until she was six-weeks pregnant, when damage to the fetus might have already occurred. At ten weeks of pregnancy, she had agreed to nasogastric tube feedings; this was followed by a gastrostomy, to allow percutaneous feedings, and by months of hospitalization.

In her second pregnancy, when Julia's efforts to conform to the restrictive diet were unsuccessful, she was asked to consume 240 pills a day or undergo repeated intravenous infusions to promote fetal well-being. Apparently, she was not faithful to the diet and she did not consume all of the pills. Julia also refused intravenous infusions and hospitalization, and eventually gave birth to an affected daughter. At a conference discussing the case, one of her doctors indicated that Julia would probably become pregnant again because her husband insisted on having a son.

When they render their verdict on what Julia should have done, Sally Satel and Christine Stolba do not distinguish between absolute and prima-facie duties. Absolute duties are obligatory in all circumstances; prima-facie duties may be overridden by other duties in particular circumstances. I agree that women (and men) have a prima-facie duty to promote the well-being of their future children. It does not follow, however, that others have a moral right to coerce them to undergo treatment, especially such invasive, prolonged, and burdensome treatments as Julia faced. Nor does it follow that this prima-facie obligation is as ethically compelling in Julia's case as it would be if the treatment imposed only a moderate burden upon her.

While objecting to the claim that those most affected deserve a "privileged status" in determining whether medical interventions are performed, the authors seem to have missed an important caveat in my account: "granting privileged status does not imply that their decisions should always prevail." Respect for patient autonomy is a prima-facie duty, not an absolute one. This prima-facie duty is supported on epistemological as well as ethical grounds: the standpoint of those most affected, whose input might otherwise be lost, offers a corrective lens to the inevitably blinkered vision of those who judge their behavior.

MARY B. MAHOWALD
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR:

Sally Satel and Christine Stolba raise some interesting points in their criticism of medical ethics and medical ethicists, but they make a fundamental error by taking examples of poor ethics and poor ethicists and pejoratively generalizing from them.

In particular, the authors criticize "the relentless emphasis of bioethicists on the idea of personal 'autonomy.'" But it is now accepted, not least by many doctors, that patient autonomy and "shared decision-making" are essential for the good practice of medicine. The old-fashioned paternalistic view that doctors always know best can no longer be justified, especially since there is a great deal of doubt about the clinical effectiveness of many treatments offered by healthcare professionals.

The authors also complain about ethicists who could not reach a consensus in deciding how to deal with a patient in a permanent vegetative state. They suggest this is analogous to doctors not being able to agree on the treatment of someone with appendicitis. Unlike in the case of appendicitis, however, there are huge ethical issues involved in the treatment of patients in permanent vegetative states. In both Great Britain and the U.S., such cases have been referred to the highest courts.

Sally Satel and Christine Stolba imply that ethicists have no role that could not be performed by doctors. But this presupposes that doctors have been trained in ethics in the first place. Although medical ethics is now being taught in most medical schools (certainly in England), it is only for a few sessions a year. And many doctors currently practicing have had no training in medical ethics at all. It took me seven years to study medical ethics while completing a master's degree and a Ph.D. Are the authors really suggesting that such training will be of little use to either doctors or their patients?

In fact, not only is there an essential place in medicine for medical ethics, but, arguably, ethics should lead medical practice. Discussion of subjects such as consent, confidentiality, euthanasia, and the rationing of health care cannot be meaningful without consideration of the ethical issues involved, and we should not rely on the intuition and prejudices of doctors or the public to make informed decisions in such matters.

There is certainly a need for doctors to understand ethics, but until the medical curriculum is extended to include more instruction on the subject, it will be unrealistic to expect doctors to be as knowledgeable as they should be.

MICHAEL M. RIVLIN, M.D.
University of Leeds
Leeds, England

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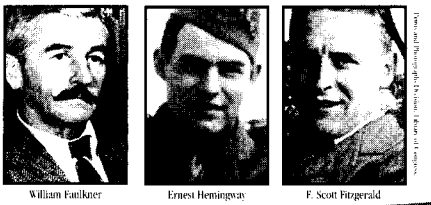
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TO THE EDITOR:

Sally Satel and Christine Stolba appropriately criticize some aspects of the burgeoning enterprise of "medical ethics." But they also bring narrow partisanship and inaccuracy to their judgments.

The proximate cause of applied-ethics programs in universities was not, as they say, the campus upheavals of the 60's but rather the new availability of funding from government and foundations. The founders of the field did not want philosophers to "leave behind the historical and technical questions that had long dominated their discipline," but to extend those skills to other areas. Philosophy has long involved different emphases on exploring abstruse questions versus "living a good life." Applied philosophy, especially in the American pragmatic tradition, is not, as the authors say, a euphemism for political agitation.

The authors do not think much of "informed consent" or the concept of patient autonomy—labeling such concerns "liberal." Some of the examples they choose do indeed show that people make self-destructive and stupid choices, and can be, as the authors say, "plainly incapable of deciding matters for themselves." But what follows from the truth of this claim—taking such choices away?

The authors are also concerned that medical ethicists have impinged on "the traditional duties of physicians." But everybody has impinged on them—patients, families, nurses, feminists, hospitals, lawyers, HMO's, the government, even other physicians with different clinical and political views. This glorious interaction, including what ethicists bring to it, is just possibly a salutary thing. One physician cited in the article complained that medical ethicists make it seem that the doctor "is looking for affirmation elsewhere" and "can't make up his own mind." This might be the beginning of wisdom.

MORRIS GROSSMAN
Fairfield University
Fairfield, Connecticut

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TO THE EDITOR:

As a senior practicing geriatrician who has recently completed a master's degree in bioethics, I have observed the serious problems caused by leaving "ethics" to physicians and the limitations that nonclinically trained ethicists exhibit when confronted with bedside dilemmas. The studies that show discordance in opinions among ethicists do not detract from the substantial benefits that knowledge of ethics brings to the clinical domain. The error lies in considering an ethics consultation to be a clinical consultation.

I prefer to think of ethics as a framework by which each of us involved in difficult care decisions can contemplate whether or not we have considered perspectives that may not be part of the standard clinical approach to problem-solving. Certainly physicians who are responsible for institutional policy regarding resource allocation benefit from the conceptual frameworks provided by knowledge of ethical principles.

One of the important questions that must be addressed is whether the future of clinical ethics lies within the purview of nonclinicians trained in bioethics or should be shifted to clinicians who receive subsequent education in bioethics. I suspect the latter will result in a more robust interplay between the knowledge that comes with clinical practice and the important principles that provide the underpinnings of bioethics.

MICHAEL GORDON, M.D.
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

TO THE EDITOR:

The only way to make sense of "Who Needs Medical Ethics?" is to conclude that it is an excerpt from something that might be respectable in its fuller form. Instead of a dispassionate intellectual or journalistic analysis, the authors give us only a diatribe based on a severely limited and even biased perspective.

The Catholic and Jewish legal-moral traditions, for example, are highly developed systems of principles—and values—that can be brought to bear on medical decisions. But one would not know this from the disparaging remarks of Sally Satel and Christine Stolba about "self-styled" ethicists. Unmentioned by them, incredibly, are such issues as sanctity of life versus quality of life. Instead, among the targets of the authors' dyspeptic attack is the concept of patient autonomy, which I am happy to inform them finds no place in the values of the Jewish and Christian religious systems.

[RABBI] DAVID M. FELDMAN
Jewish Institute of Bioethics
Teaneck, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR:

Hooray for Sally Satel and Christine Stolba and their efforts to expose the injustice befalling America's sick as a result of medical-ethics "experts." As a resident in surgery at a large teaching hospital, I am baffled by the interference of medical ethicists in patient care. By vesting medical ethicists with a pulpit from which to sermonize and influence care, hospital administrators fail to understand that the art and science of medicine are intimately related.

The intervention of a third party in the doctor-patient relationship reduces the physician's role to that of mere technician. Most troubling, the delegation of ethics issues to lay people implicitly compels physicians to abandon their patients, often during their greatest time of need. Patients do not want an automaton unguided by ethics caring for them. They want a well-trained humanist who can help alleviate both their physical and emotional suffering.

As I complete my medical training, I can only hope that I grow more able to treat my patients as whole beings and not as a collection of separate problems. Abandoning my patients by

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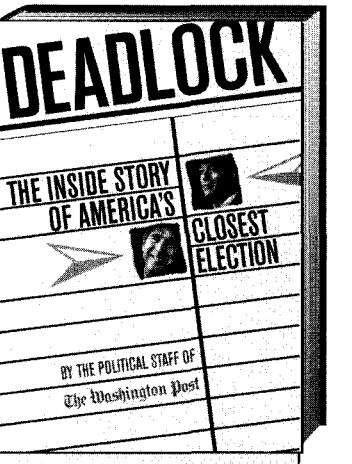

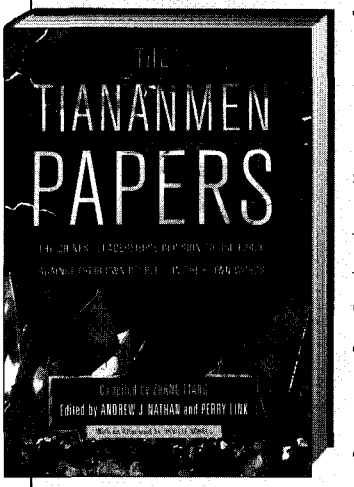

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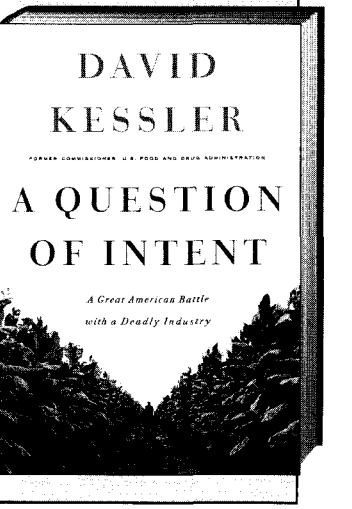

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"consulting" others on issues of medical ethics is simply not a responsible option—I took an oath that prevents me from doing so.

ELAN B. SINGER, M.D.
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Bravo to Sally Satel and Christine Stolba for a long-overdue critical look at the dubious need for medical ethicists. To be fair, though, it is not so much that these practitioners have invented themselves as that the need for them has been created by the conflicting moral signals that have arisen from various judicial rulings and state laws. The result is a perplexed society that is seeking clear guideposts in a labyrinthine mess.

None of this should be surprising, given that "patient autonomy" is the sacred cow of our time and that the traditional role of physicians as medical decisors is seen as unacceptably paternalistic. Though committing suicide is still illegal in most states, statutes exist guaranteeing the right of a patient or proxy to make decisions regarding the withholding or withdrawal of care that are tantamount to suicide but preserve "autonomy."

While it is true that mind-boggling medical advances coupled with longer life-expectancy have created new "gray areas," it was not that long ago that physicians well understood their charge of prolonging life and mitigating suffering. Now, they are asked to temper medical decisions once made on the basis of medical necessity with extraneous considerations such as family wishes and directives left in advance by patients. Ever mindful of the new bottom-line mentality that has overtaken the health-care industry, hospitals force doctors to be the allocators of limited medical resources by triaging admissions to intensive-care wards. Throw in ethics jargon, with terms such as "wrongful life," "personhood", and "futurity," to muddy the mix, and you have a situation to confound the most well-meaning physician or family member.

ELI J. KLEINMAN, M.D.
Riverdale, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

The discussion of medical ethics by Sally Satel and Christine Stolba jolted me into the realization that I have harbored similar perceptions for some time.

Now retired, I practiced neurosurgery for 40 years. Starting about 1970 or so, I was a member of the first ethics committee at a large local hospital. The first incarnation of the committee, made up only of physicians, functioned well. The second committee was chaired by the hospital chaplain, and it, too, until the hospital lawyer persuaded his law partner to join, was composed entirely of physicians.

Then in the early 80's, as medical ethics became chic, the hospital's board of directors appointed a lay businessman and board member as chairman; he felt a need to educate himself as well as the rest of the committee, so we were treated to meetings devoted to discussing reading lists. The committee had less actual involvement with real cases, and, over the years, other physicians and I lost interest and wandered away.

Thanks to Sally Satel and Christine Stolba, I now see that this issue is probably more serious than I realized. Doctors have not fully understood what has happened to them and to the practice of medicine over the last few decades.

C. KEITH WHITTAKER, M.D.
Kansas City, Missouri

TO THE EDITOR:

Sally Satel and Christine Stolba provide a thoughtful analysis of the new profession of medical ethics. As a practicing physician for over 30 years, I have noted that many of the cases discussed at the meetings of hospital ethics committees, which I occasionally attend, seem to result from a failure to communicate.

Consider this example: an eighty-year-old man is dying of lung cancer and emphysema, and the hospital staff is trying to decide whether he should be placed on a ventilator. The patient has left incomplete instructions and is now unable to communicate. Everyone agrees not to do "too much," but then his youngest daughter, who has not seen her dad for ten years and has little awareness of his failing health but a great deal of guilt over her own absence, arrives on the scene and insists that "everything" be done.

The situation quickly deteriorates and enemy camps form. Some nurses join the newly arrived daughter in insisting that the patient can and should be put on a ventilator. Nobody approaches the daughter to ask how she is feeling or to empathize with her concerns. Soon it is time for an ethics-committee consultation.

How might such a situation be handled better? Most of all, it is essential for the doctor to turn his attention to the daughter as a person with feelings, values, and hopes. Her emotional concerns must be taken into account before she can hear what the doctor has to say about medical treatment. A physician, in short, must seek first to understand before trying to be understood. But perhaps communication is harder than ethics.

FREDERIC W. PLATT, M.D.
Denver, Colorado

TO THE EDITOR:

Sally Satel and Christine Stolba raise important issues in "Who Needs Medical Ethics?" Their skepticism about bioethics needs to be heeded.

The discipline of medical ethics sees its own history as the triumph of enlightenment and informed moral expertise over the insulated naiveté of medicine. Yet in examining the particular topics with which the emerging bioethics movement justified this shift in ethical authority, I have found its version of history to be simply wrong. In the case of brain death, for example, early exponents of bioethics in the late 60's and early 70's pointed to the work of Harvard's so-called "brain-death committee" as an instance of physicians inappropriately assuming that they had expertise over philosophical questions. But even a cursory examination of the work of the committee shows their longstanding and fairly ethical commitments, commitments developed in the context of decades of practical concern about the unnecessary intrusiveness of medical technology.

As this history suggests, and as Sally Satel and Christine Stolba emphasize, bio-

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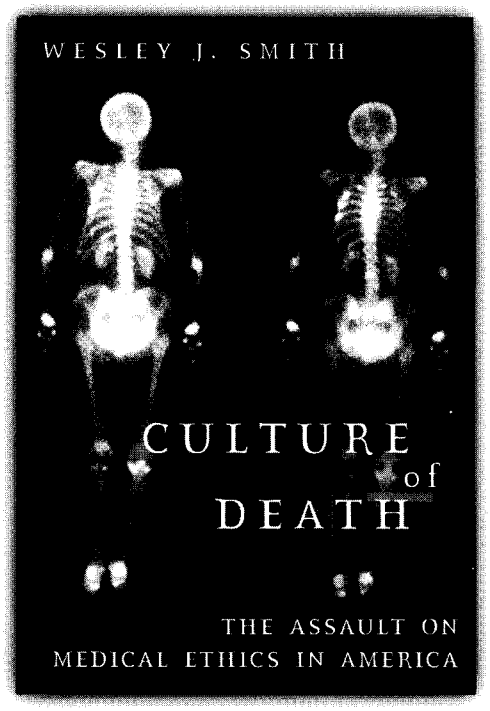
Culture of Death

The Assault on Medical Ethics in America

by Wesley J. Smith



When his teenaged son Christopher–brain-damaged in an auto accident–developed a 106-degree fever following weeks of unconsciousness, John Campbell asked the attending physician for help. The doctor's response: Why bother? The boy's life was effectively over. Refusing to accept this death sentence, Campbell threatened legal action and the doctor finally relented. With treatment, Christopher's temperature subsided almost immediately. Soon he regained consciousness, and today he is learning to walk again.

This chilling case history is one of many described in Wesley J. Smith's new book **Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America.** Smith goes behind the scenes of our health care system to show how doctors, relying on "Futile Care Theory," withdraw desired treatment. And how this is just one of the ominous developments resulting from the theories of a self-proclaimed elite of "bioethicists." In their brave new worldview, cognitively disabled patients can be dehydrated to death; organs can be harvested from the terminally ill and disabled, and animals receive greater protection in medical experiments than people.

After accompanying Wesley Smith on this dark journey through the doctors' offices, operating rooms, and bioethics seminars where the "right to die" is slowly being transformed into the duty to die, the reader will agree that we stand at a medical and cultural crossroad-and that we must embrace a new philosophy of human and medical rights if we are to have any chance of reasserting the sanctity of life.

"In **Culture of Death**, Wesley Smith, who has done vast research on assisted suicide and euthanasia, describes how many of us have gotten to the point of believing some lives are not worth living."

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ethics has earned its authoritative standing not because of the rigor of its arguments, but because of its practitioners' simple faith in those arguments.

GARY S. BELKIN, M.D.
Harvard Medical School
Boston, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for the article on medical ethics by Sally Satel and Christine Stolba. Despite being a philosopher myself, I have to say that philosophers are not necessarily the best people to advise others on ethics, in part because they are so blind to the flaws in their own profession.

Most philosophers are employed in academia, yet they seldom discuss moral issues related to higher education. In the latest version of the *Philosopher's Index*, a search for the term "medical ethics" yields 1,930 entries, while a similar search for "academic ethics" yields only nine. Why should a profession unwilling to confront its own ethical problems be an ethical adviser to another profession?

JOHN PEPPLE
Kenyon College
Gambier, Ohio

SALLY SATEL and CHRISTINE STOLBA write:

Albert R. Jonsen is no doubt right that doctors benefit from being taught such skills as "creative problem-solving," "listening well," and "communicating interest and respect." But there is no reason to think they cannot learn these things in medical school and through professional experience. There is nothing wrong, of course, with having medical students discuss difficult cases with a trained ethicist in a classroom setting, and if a doctor wishes to explore the deeper philosophical dimensions of his work, he should by all means engage an academic colleague with a background in the subject.

What we question is the claim that medical ethicists are indispensable to clinical decision-making. In this regard, Mr. Jonsen is incorrect to say that medical ethicists "do not make medical decisions in any sense whatsoever." A vocal minority within the field endorses the so-called "authoritarian approach," which, according to a 1998 report by the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities, emphasizes the need to make ethics consultants "the primary moral decision-maker." Among the examples cited in the report is an ethicist who recommended that a Jehovah's Witness be given treatment against his wishes.

Mary B. Mahowald's elaboration of the case of Julia Smith Andre further reinforces our view that Andre behaved unethically toward her unborn child—though probably not illegally—when she refused to follow a special diet. Having already been through one pregnancy, Andre knew precisely the risks she was taking. The regimen may indeed have "nauseated" her (and—heaven forbid—offended the palate of her epicurean husband), but the harm to her child was avoidable, and is now irreparable.

Michael M. Rivlin points out that some clinical cases have posed such vexing problems that they have ended up in court. We did not argue that doctors hold the answer to every medical dilemma, only that bioethicists, as a group, have no particular skill in resolving them. Dr. Rivlin may have devoted seven years of advanced study to medical ethics, but the profession also includes many graduates of "intensive" university programs who, after as little as ten days of instruction, are sent into clinical settings to "do" medical ethics.

Morris Grossman is gravely mistaken: we consider patient autonomy very important, but not when patients are mentally incompetent. As for Michael Gordon, though we do not share his high opinion of formal instruction in med-

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ical ethics, we too hope that the future of the field lies with doctors who are more broadly trained rather than with nonclinicians.

David M. Feldman is correct to note the long-standing Catholic and Jewish legal-moral traditions and their insights into medical ethics. Indeed, some of the earliest and best work in bioethics was produced by theologians and religious leaders. Unfortunately, as secular academics have come to dominate the field, religious views have been marginalized, particularly with regard to questions concerning the sanctity of life—a trend that has been discussed with great insight by the physician-ethicist Edmund Pellegrino of Georgetown University.

Our thanks to Elan B. Singer, Eli J. Kleinman, C. Keith Whittaker, Frederic W. Platt, Gary S. Belkin, and John Pepple for their kind words and useful observations.

Old England

TO THE EDITOR:

For an American like me who has spent the whole of his adult life in the United Kingdom, Norman Podhoretz's article, "The Last Time I Saw London" [January], was of interest. He mentions but does not stress a point that seems quite important—the fact that the "chattering classes" who are the heirs of Bloomsbury have for the last four decades assiduously taught the Brit-ish to despise themselves, their imperial history, and their royal family.

When I lived in the Hampstead section of London, back in the Jurassic pre-1960's, this line was the property of a relatively small and resolutely left-wing clique, many of whom I knew personally. Since then, they and their views have spread into the world of politics and the media, while their "message" has become a set of knee-jerk *idées reçues* regularly on display on BBC television and radio and in the commercial media—not to mention "liberal" papers, like the *Independent*, the *Guardian* and, even now and then, the *Times*. Only the *Telegraph* dissents wholeheartedly from these corrosive views.

Mr. Podhoretz might also have mentioned the awkward question of Europe, and the present highly significant attempt of Tony Blair to salami-slice away the sovereignty of the United Kingdom, ceding it to the bureaucratic monstrosity in Brussels. To that end, Blair has opened up the nationalist faultlines among England, Wales, and Scotland, and begun the process of separating Ulster from the UK.

I doubt whether any of this would have been politically possible without the energetic work of a whole generation of intellectuals, who have succeeded in implanting in the British a set of assumptions about their country: a) national pride is evil; b) the British are, despicably racist (if they happen to be white) and culturally inferior to the ethnic groups who have emigrated here since the 50's; c) the British are also inherently brutal, oppressive, and above all in need of restraint by a paternal guiding hand from above; and d) as a result, they must look now to their government for all good things, self-reliance (especially as praised by Margaret Thatcher) being by definition selfish, cruel, and thoroughly immoral.

All this has had its effect on what one might call the democratic morale of the electorate. There are a few signs of popular reaction against this decades-long horror story, but so far they are weak and uncertain. The next election will show how seriously we may take them.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

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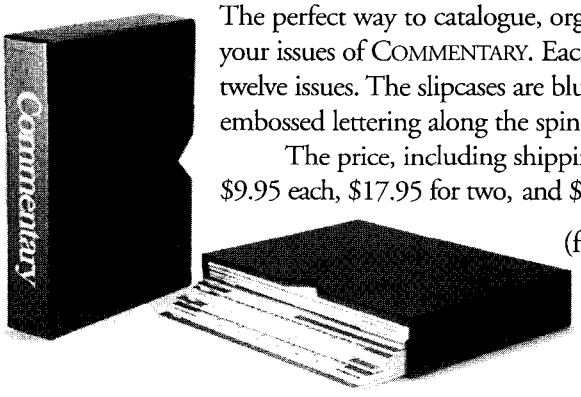

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TO THE EDITOR:

I appreciated Norman Podhoretz's "The Last Time I Saw London." I have had similar emotions about the city, where I first lived in 1949 and which I visit often. Like Mr. Podhoretz, I am left with a nagging wonderment about the changes that have taken place. For many Brits, the Albion that counts most now seems to be the soccer team, West Bromwich Albion, and it is perhaps the only one they would die for. The Union Jack no longer flies on buildings, and the Christmas crèche is absent lest offense be given to some minority group hailing from elsewhere.

On a more basic level, the National Health Service is defunct and has no likely role in the future except as a safety-net in a two-tier system. The railways do not work. The public educational service is second-rate and produces a significant percentage of functional illiterates. A general election is due soon, but it seems unlikely that anything will change so long as anti-elitism and political correctness remain the order of the day and race is allowed to dominate the dialogue.

I would hope that Britain might have a role in rescuing the countries of Africa from their misery, by means not of handouts but of a form of neocolonialism, based on a long experience not completely forgotten, that is acceptable to the recipients. It is unlikely to happen, but deep down there sometimes stirs a small hope in those of us who recall the majesty of Empire as well as its shortcomings.

HYWEL DAVIES
Icogne, Switzerland

TO THE EDITOR:

I found Norman Podhoretz's reaction to London and things English interesting indeed. His perceptive and sympathetic account of some fundamental aspects of the "old country," as it is and was, is obviously based both on personal knowledge and his immersion in the literature and history of that astonishing nation.

The stiff-upperlipian adjectives which appear toward the end of Mr. Podhoretz's account are not—or at least were not—mere literary caricatures of the English personality. It is nothing short of a miracle that a relatively small island people—a strange mixture of Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Norsemen, Romans, Norman French, and Huguenots—came to bestride the world like a colossus and in the process to produce a literature of breathtaking range and quality, not to mention revolutionary changes in science, medicine, industry exploration, navigation, architecture, warfare, colonial settlement, and, above all, government and law.

Unfortunately, since Victorian times, when Britain rose to the very apogee of its power and influence, its social and civic standards have disintegrated, a process brought to a head by Tony Blair and now well entrenched.

DONALD R. SNIPPER
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

TO THE EDITOR:

Having lived in England from 1935 to 1949 and visited at intervals thereafter, I agree entirely with Norman Podhoretz's observations and conclusions.

To me, Great Britain's final break with its admir-

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able and beneficent past came when it abandoned the system of pounds, shilling, pence, and guineas and switched to metric denominations and a shoddy and cheap-looking currency. The old system may have been more cumbersome and required more brain power, but it proclaimed to the world that England was proud of its heritage and accomplishments and did not care too much about the opinions of others.

Kurt G. Strauss
Tucson, Arizona

To the Editor:

I thought Norman Podhoretz's reflections on the changes in England very good. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger would have called the thing he experienced a "withdrawal of Being." A better vocabulary might just say an evaporation of seriousness. Tony Blair is not a serious person; Margaret Thatcher was. So much of England now is "throw-away" culture.

Jeffrey Hart
Lyme, New Hampshire

Norman Podhoretz writes:

The late Huw Wheldon, who was managing director of BBC television before it, like so many other British institutions, went to pot, once told me that England tended to catch all the diseases of American culture but would get them in a milder form. If Herb Greer is right, though, the process has now been reversed.

For the rest, I wish to thank Hywel Davies, Donald R. Snipper, Kurt G. Strauss, and Jeffrey Hart for their generous comments about my article, and for adding so many illuminating details to the ones I cited.

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CONTROVERSY

Missile Defense

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. & Critics

JAMES CLAY MOLTZ:

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. would be well advised to listen to some sensible old Republicans regarding missile defense ["Bush, Missile Defense, and the Critics," February]. As President Eisenhower's Secretary of Defense Neil H. McElroy stated in 1958 regarding the Nike Zeus system: "We should not spend hundreds of millions on production of this weapon pending general confirmatory indications that we know what we are doing." Mr. Gaffney rejects these reasonable guidelines and argues for the opposite approach: deploy now, figure out a plan later. This approach makes as little sense today as it did in 1958.

In 2001, the United States faces a limited threat from a few, relatively weak states with short- or intermediate-range missiles. Fortunately, the United States has many tools in its arsenal to prevent these countries from actually using those weapons: nuclear deterrence, vast conventional superiority, economic levers, strong allies, and deployed theater missile-defense technologies.

Given these advantages, the United States should use its tremendous power and influence to build an international consensus against missile proliferators, to perfect treaty-compliant technologies at the theater level (where the primary threats reside), and to explore alternative means to combat missile proliferation (including economic incentives, regional negotiations, and verifiable arms-control measures). Foremost in our minds should be overall U.S. goals for a new post-cold-war security structure: greater stability and the expansion of U.S. influence and alliances.

Rushing ahead to near-term deployment of a national missile defense (NMD) will instead isolate the United States from its allies, who have opposed NMD almost unanimously. It will also stimulate possible opponents to develop new types of weapons to counteract—or simply avoid—our missile-defense shield. The net result will be that both the United States and other countries will spend more money and receive less security in return.

Past experience and over $100 billion spent on missile defenses since the early 1960's suggest that an effective military solution will be hard to accomplish in any case. Thus, the United States should not blindly adopt near-term military deployments and close off political negotiations before, in the words of Secretary McElroy, "we know what we are doing."

Center for Nonproliferation Studies
Monterey Institute of International Studies
Monterey, California

MICHAEL J. MAZARR:

As a long-standing member of what Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. calls the "obligatory lineup of arms-control 'experts,'" I am delighted to offer my thoughts on his charming screed. His bottom line is suspiciously inoffensive: the "Aegis option," a modest, sea-based system less likely to enrage China and Russia and far less expensive than other ideas.

Sounds great. But that is just an opening gambit. Mr. Gaffney actually yearns for the same "tiered" system of defenses as the NMD apostles of the 1980's, an as-close-to-leak-proof-as-possible shield to safeguard the American way of life and drive a high-tech stake through the calcified heart of the ABM treaty. In the end, he is not talking about missile defense

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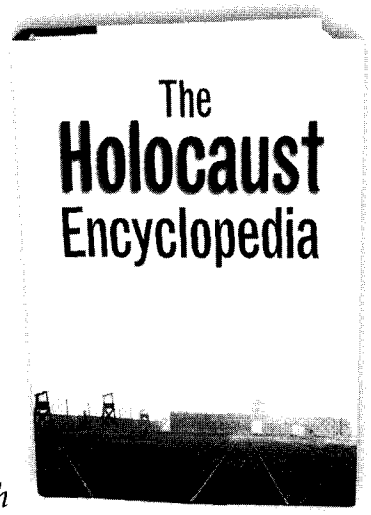

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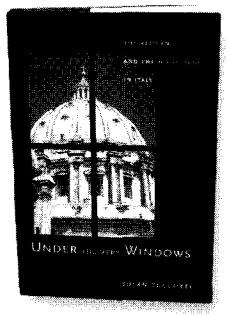

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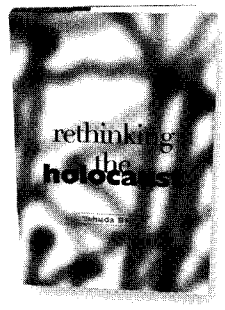
Yehuda Bauer



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so much as national policy at the broadest level—a brazenly unilateralist approach to guarding what little security is available in a global system of unending rivalry and war.

But security is not a unilateral thing, and never has been. Since Athens' overweening pride and desire for power brought on war with Sparta and ultimately much of the rest of Greece, the core theme of realist theories of world politics has been the same: not to grab lots of power, but to be prudent and restrained. Reaching for too much security will bring to life a coalition against you, and lay the ground for your defeat.

Precisely such a dynamic is at work today. States around the world, from great powers to small, are busily discussing ways to counteract America's cultural, economic, and military hegemony. Mr. Gaffney's answer—throw up walls! defend ourselves!—would only exacerbate the problem. There are many other options for addressing these risks short of putting on a national helmet and clamping our eyes closed.

Some very modest missile defense, carefully calibrated to deal with many of the modest threats Mr. Gaffney catalogues but not so large as to emasculate the nuclear forces of China? Developed in concert with our allies and in close, regular, serious, compromise-oriented consultation with nations like Russia and China? Erected in parallel with further reductions of nuclear weapons and nuclear-alert levels? Fine. But what needs to be recognized about those few true theologians of missile defense is that they want so much more, and thus reveal themselves as the great antirealists of our age.

President
Henry L. Stimson Center
Washington, D.C.

JOSEF JOFFE:

Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, America's ray-in-the-sky, died an unheralded death because it was a Rube Goldberg system hawked to rubes: people who dearly wanted to believe in a missile umbrella but did not understand the gargantuan costs and the overwhelming technological difficulties. Ground-based lasers, space-based lasers, "brilliant pebbles," huge reflectors in space that would direct a lethal beam from the ground toward an intended target far above—it was almost literally a smoke-and-mirrors act, and it justly faded away.

In the past fifteen years, computing power has of course skyrocketed while the cost has been plummeting. Radars have become a lot more sophisticated and discriminating. So why not try again? But it is still not easy. Two tests (with kinetic-kill vehicles) have failed, while a third has had to be juggled to register success. Almost $50 billion has been slated between now and 2015. Triple that sum, for that is how procurement politics work in real life. That is a lot of money for an uncertain defense against a few missiles launched by rogue states. No, the real logic of NMD points against a resurgent Russia and a rising China, and especially against a China that has been signaling the U.S., ever so subtly, that "The Pacific is our lake, move over." But now we are talking about real money—about a system that will continually win the defense/offense race in favor of today's "last remaining superpower." So triple the bill again—to $500 billion, say.

Is there not a more efficient way to keep China and Russia on their best behavior? And how much political capital is the U.S. willing to spend in order to pacify Russia, China, and Europe? Or failing that, how much will it cost, compounded into the future, to live with riled rivals and exasperated allies?

Let's face it. Balancing against today's number-one power has already begun: Russians, Chinese, and Europeans clearly do not want to face a United States that will loom even larger if protected by a shield that actually works (of course, that is a big if). NMD has become a Republican religion, and there are plenty of Democrats who say amen. But who is thinking about the political bill? Why risk America's cozy position for a ray-in-the-sky? Why hemorrhage zillions for a porous defense that might create precisely the insecurity it is designed to dispel? Advice to Mr. Bush: keep the research well-funded, but look before you leap.

Editor
Die Zeit
Hamburg, Germany

FRANK VON HIPPEL:

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. is strong on rhetoric but weak on facts and analysis.

With regard to interceptions in space, he asserts that "we are well-positioned to prevail in such measure-versus-countermeasure contests." One wishes that he had given some basis for this assertion. History is littered with proposed missile-defense systems that were launched with similar statements of faith, only to be abandoned after expenditures of billions of dollars because government officials were finally forced to confront the fact that they had no adequate answers to the challenge of discriminating between simple decoys like aluminized airbags and warheads surrounded by similar bags.

As a backup, Mr. Gaffney suggests that we can always resort to the "brute-force" system of using nuclear warheads on our interceptors. In that case, he argues, "one can be confident that both the real reentry vehicle and everything masquerading as it will be destroyed." Apparently, no one has told him how big space is. In ten minutes, a cloud of decoys from a single intercontinental missile could expand to a diameter of 500 miles. By contrast, the radius of destruction caused by a nuclear explosion would not be much greater than ten miles. President Nixon's Safeguard system was abandoned because its designers

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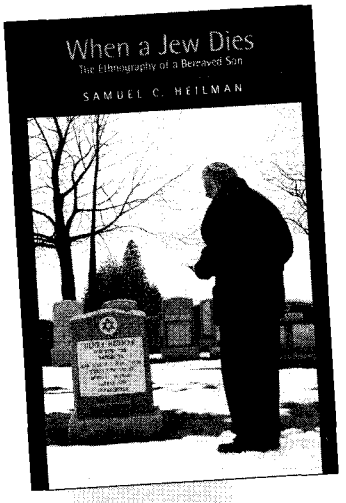

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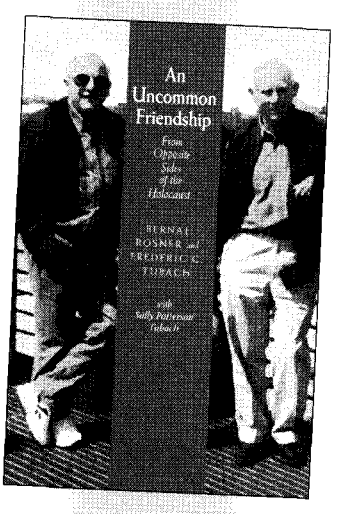
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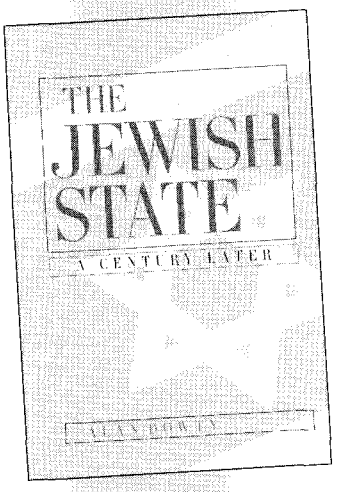

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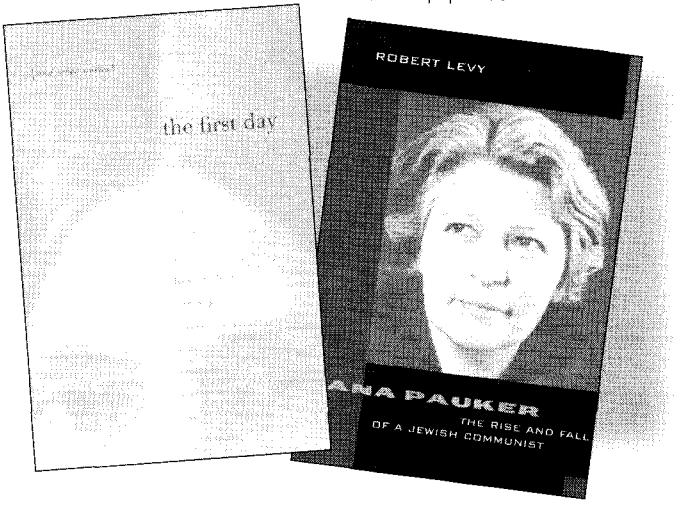

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had no answer to countermeasures and multiple warheads, even though its long-range interceptors had nuclear warheads, each with an explosive power equal to 5 million tons of TNT.

Finally, Mr. Gaffney advises against Secretary of State Powell's "worrisome suggestion . . . that the Pentagon be asked to undertake a comprehensive and, of necessity, time-consuming examination of all available technologies," for that would put in danger Mr. Gaffney's objective of "dispensing once and for all with the obsolete, legally defunct, and increasingly dangerous Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty." His principal objective, in other words, is to shoot down not missiles but cooperative nuclear-arms control.

Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

WILLIAM A. SHURCLIFF:

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. mentions the possibility that a rogue nation might try to circumvent our missile defenses by resorting to smuggling atomic bombs, deadly chemicals, or deadly bacteria, but makes no suggestion as to how to monitor the contents of the hundreds of airplanes, trucks, and cars that cross into our country each day from Canada and Mexico, or the dozens of big ships that enter our main seaports, or the tens of thousands of small boats that enter our harbors. Why? Is it because he can find no practical solution?

In this connection, Mr. Gaffney also fails to differentiate among general types of risk. One type is independent. Thus, a house may catch fire, or be burglarized, and an owner can take steps to reduce or eliminate each of these risks. But suppose a second type of risk: a neighbor who has two guns and threatens to shoot my dog. If I eliminate one of the guns, have I reduced the danger by half? Not at all. He will simply switch to the other alternative; the danger is as great as ever.

Mr. Gaffney writes that "Prudent home-owners purchase insurance against both fire and theft," but fire and theft are independent threats, whereas delivery of a bomb by rocket and delivery by smuggling are alternative threats, and smuggling might actually be the superior method.

Mr. Gaffney also recommends bolstering our defenses by means of a great network of orbiting spaceships equipped with radars, destroyer missiles, and launchers—or lasers. These (he says) could destroy a rogue missile within minutes of its launch. But how practical is any of this? How would others—Russia, China, our allies—feel about a U.S. global network of spaceships equipped with powerful weapons readied for instant use? Besides, calling for a global sea force and global space force to supplement the initial (land-based) system makes the whole proposal three times more difficult and expensive—not to mention that all three can be circumvented by smuggling.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

ROGER C. NICHOLAS, III:

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr.'s article raises a number of interesting issues, but I want to focus in particular on his account of America's earlier anti-ballistic-missile system, Safeguard. I played a role in this as the principal staff member of the congressional subcommittee that initiated appropriations for the construction of Safeguard sites.

Mr. Gaffney states that the Nixon administration "had been encountering serious difficulties in its efforts to mobilize congressional support for a national anti-missile system." But this is misleading. The Safeguard system was first proposed as a defense of our land-based Minuteman missiles and of some Strategic Air Command bomber bases, with an option to expand it to a nationwide defense only should that prove feasible and affordable.

As a point of defense for our Minuteman missile silos, the Safeguard system had several good aspects. While in theory it would have been possible for the Soviets to overwhelm any particular site by exhausting the supply of our interceptor missiles and then attacking the Minuteman silos themselves, the uncertainties in planning such an attack were large. Since the result of miscalculation would be the destruction of the attacker's country, this system was a real deterrent whether it worked as intended or not.

As a nationwide defense, however, Safeguard was neither secure nor cost-effective, even if it could have worked exactly as planned. If you are attacking cities, any nuclear weapon that gets through will achieve its end. Moreover, for an attacker to add more incoming warheads was and is much more cost-effective than for a defender to add more defensive sites and missiles. The result was that the Nixon administration quickly abandoned the idea of a nationwide system, pledging itself only to point defense.

Our subcommittee, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the House of Representatives (and of course the Senate) provided the funding for the initial site at Grand Forks, North Dakota, and the first phases of construction for the second site at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, without too much difficulty. Opposition arose only when a third Safeguard site was proposed in the vicinity of Chicago. Interestingly enough, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird pushed for expanding the system to a third site because doing so would induce the Russians to limit their own ABM system in accordance with the treaty the administration was then trying to negotiate. We got the planning money for the third site through Congress largely on that basis.

It was only after the ABM treaty was successfully negotiated and

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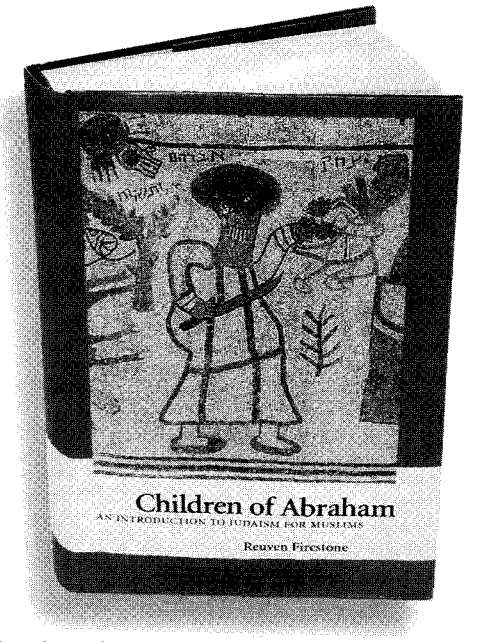

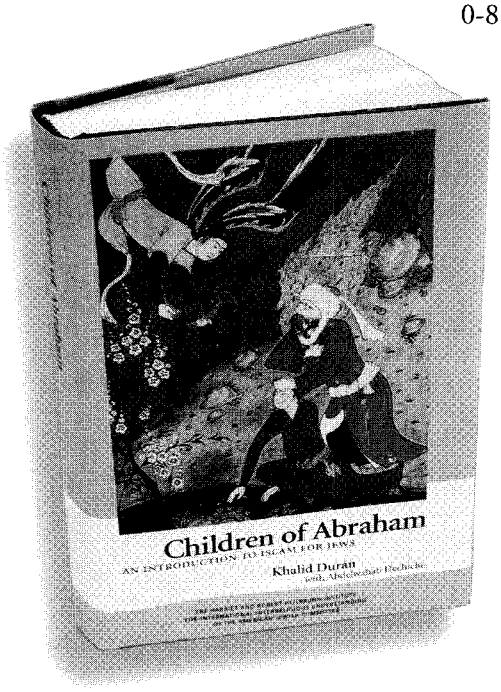

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signed that it was decided there were better ways to spend money for strategic systems than to continue to operate the site at Grand Forks.

Washington, D.C.

MARC W. SCHNEIDER:

Although Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. makes a strong case for a missile defense, he overstates the threat from rogue nations like Iran, Libya, Syria, and Iraq. Such nations are no more interested in national suicide than any other; even though "leaders" like Saddam Hussein and Muammar Qaddafi are ruthless and evil men, they are not necessarily irrational. At bottom, they are motivated primarily by their desire to maintain power, and launching a nuclear-tipped missile against the United States in a fit of rage is simply not conducive to that end. Even most mullahs, I suspect, would not see much utility in an act that would leave millions of Iranians dead and invite massive U.S. intervention.

The real threat that ballistic missiles pose to the United States is in inhibiting our foreign policy. Suppose, for example, that North Korea, in its death throes, were to initiate a crisis on the Korean peninsula that required a military response. The knowledge that North Korea could strike the American homeland, even with a single missile, would certainly be enough to give pause to Washington. This threat would be especially credible since North Korean leaders might perceive themselves as having nothing to lose.

The same point can be made about other parts of the globe. Indeed, China has already suggested that in a struggle over Taiwan, Washington might have to risk a nuclear strike on Los Angeles.

Whether or not this justifies the expense of building a missile-defense system, it is different from saying that we need to protect ourselves against a random missile from a lunatic state.

Rockville, Maryland

KENNETH H.W. HILBORN:

I do not disagree with Frank J. Gaffney, Jr.'s view that the ABM treaty was rendered invalid by the fall of the Soviet Union, but his interpretation is controversial. Critics may argue that just as Russia was allowed to inherit the former Soviet seat (and veto) in the United Nations Security Council, so it also inherited the Soviet Union's treaty rights. In order to avoid unnecessary disputes, it would therefore surely be desirable for the United States to carry out the diplomatic formality of withdrawing from the ABM treaty in accordance with the treaty's own terms. In any case, the notice required (six months) is no more than Mr. Gaffney suggests should be given before a defensive deployment begins.

I accept Mr. Gaffney's argument that a sea-based anti-missile system is probably the best one attainable within the near future, but I hope that deployment of such a system will not reduce the priority given to achieving something better. Any surface-based defense, requiring interceptor missiles to climb through the atmosphere and overcome gravity in order to reach their targets, is likely to be far less satisfactory than a space-based system.

The closest approximation of an ideal defense would consist of orbiting space-battleships equipped with rocket engines enabling them to maneuver, and armed with both lasers and the space counterpart of air-to-air missiles. Even if not powerful enough to destroy warheads, lasers could presumably eliminate thin-skinned balloon decoys, leaving the warheads exposed to interception. Space-to-space missiles could attack these warheads at high speed, if necessary overtaking them from behind.

In order to emphasize the increasingly urgent need for anti-missile defense, Mr. Gaffney might have examined the implications of land-based missiles that are mobile. As long as an attacker's missiles are in fixed and known locations, he faces two unsatisfactory choices—either to launch all his missiles in the first strike or to retain part of his force and face the prospect of its being destroyed on the ground when the victim strikes back. By contrast, if missiles are on mobile launchers that can be reliably concealed, perhaps in tunnels or beneath underpasses, it becomes more tempting to launch only one or two of them. After destroying a single American city to show that he is in earnest, an attacker could announce demands, warning that either retaliation or a failure to comply with the demands would mean the loss of additional cities. With no means of taking out the enemy missiles before launch—and with no defense—the United States would be in a very awkward situation.

University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

DANIEL GOURE:

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. makes an excellent case that NMD is necessary, desirable, and feasible. I seek only to amplify some of his arguments.

Mr. Gaffney identifies only the immediate threat: the so-called rogue states. But the sources of the infection, or at least major factors in spreading the disease, are Russia and China. Russia has provided guidance and engine technologies, design information, and possibly entire missile stages to its clients in Asia and the Middle East. China has been caught providing Pakistan with ballistic missiles and large magnets with which to construct a facility to enrich nuclear materials. In the meantime, the failure of arms control has been near absolute.

With respect to the desirability of NMD, the deployment of defenses may be the only way to break out of the cold-war mindset, with its emphasis on the vulnerability of both sides and holding at risk cities, factories, military installations, and, ultimately, people. Besides, further

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reductions in strategic forces will make it difficult to hold at risk most military targets, and the result could be a slide toward targeting cities. The idea of threatening to burn down Russian or Chinese cities in response to a conflict in Eastern Europe or the Taiwan Strait is simply ludicrous.

It may be possible to offer Russia a grand bargain: deep reductions in strategic offensive forces in return for major revisions to the ABM treaty. Budget considerations alone will force Russia to reduce its strategic nuclear forces to 1,000 or so warheads before the end of this decade. Such a grand bargain would see reductions in U.S. strategic forces to levels approximating Russia's steady-state capability and freedom to deploy a thin NMD. In addition, the bargain would have to allow the unlimited deployment and use of sensors, freedom to test and develop advanced defensive weapons, and the abandonment of efforts to constrain theater defenses.

Finally, on the subject of feasibility, progress in missile defense over the past few years has been truly phenomenal. Critics can no longer credibly argue that you cannot "hit a bullet with a bullet." In addition to the various kinetic systems, the U.S. is well on its way to fielding a set of directed-energy systems. Mr. Gaffney mentions one, the airborne laser (ABL), scheduled to have a live-fire test in mid-2003 and to deploy its first combat unit as early as 2007. Just this past year, the tactical high-energy laser (THEL) program demonstrated a successful shoot-down of a short-range missile. Development of optics and related technologies to support space-based weapons is proceeding.

In view of the threat and the broad requirement to defend the U.S. homeland from attack, I would echo Mr. Gaffney's argument that it is time to stop debating and start acting.

Lexington Institute
Arlington, Virginia

Frank J. Gaffney, Jr.

James Clay Moltz cites former Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy to make the case for not spending significant sums on missile defense until we know what we are doing. My argument is that it is time for us to stop spending, not the hundreds of millions McElroy was concerned about at the time of the Nike Zeus program in the late 1950's, but billions of dollars on defenses that we have no intention of deploying.

Since President Reagan launched his Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983, the issue has never been that we have not known what we are doing. Rather, we have been constrained by policy—specifically, adherence to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty—only to do work guaranteed to produce negligible results. After all, the ABM treaty prohibits the development, testing, and deployment of competent strategic missile defenses. Not surprisingly, none has to date been developed, tested, or deployed. As long as this continues to be the context within which we must operate, none ever will be.

President Bush appears to understand that the other options Mr. Moltz advocates—an "international consensus against missile proliferators," "ABM treaty-compliant technologies at the theater level," and "alternative means to combat missile proliferation"—are inadequate to our future security needs. Bush is right about that. If we do get on with the deployment of defenses that can protect our citizens, territory, and forces and allies overseas, we will not only know what we are doing, we will be doing it.

Such a defense would, of necessity, start with the relatively modest deployment of sea-based anti-missile systems aboard existing Aegis ships. Michael J. Mazarr calls this approach "suspiciously inoffensive," warning that it would be but the beginning of a far more comprehensive program. This, in turn, smacks to him of "American hegemony," not the sort of "prudent and restrained" approach to power that "realist theories of world politics" commend.

This is really rich. Realism is hardly the word that comes to mind in characterizing an ABM treaty rooted in the notion that America will be perfectly secure only when perfectly vulnerable to ballistic-missile attack. Neither does it fit the treaty's champions, who, like Mr. Mazarr, argue that we should defend ourselves only pursuant to "compromise-oriented consultation with nations like Russia and China." In fact, a bona-fide "realist" would appreciate that the Russian and Chinese governments have had every incentive to oppose the deployment of U.S. missile defenses—whether because they have found our vulnerability useful or because in the most practical terms they have been unwilling to diminish the economic value of the ballistic missiles and relevant technology they are exporting to every rogue state on the planet.

I am afraid that Josef Joffe may not have read the section of my article explaining that the two test failures experienced by the Clinton defense system were the result of minor quality-control glitches and not of some insuperable technical hurdle. We have made missile defenses work in the past; today, even inveterate critics like Theodore Postol and Richard Garwin have acknowledged that sea-based, boost-phase technologies could prove effective in the future.

Mr. Joffe's main objection, however, seems to be that American taxpayers will have to pay too dearly for an effective system. But the estimates he seems to be working with—"zillions" of dollars—are seriously exaggerated. As for our allies, there is already evidence that many of them have begun to view the idea of missile defense more favorably; and as for our "riled rivals," Mr. Joffe has in the past articulated as well as anyone the principle that

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appeasing enemies of freedom is not good policy. Surely that must be true vis-à-vis a China that has, as he puts it, "been signaling the U.S . . . that 'the Pacific is our lake, move over.'"

IT IS hardly a surprise that Frank von Hippel, one of our leading proponents of nuclear disarmament, should object to nuclear-tipped missile defenses as a means of overcoming the challenge posed by an attacker's decoys and other countermeasures. That such weapons can greatly improve the effectiveness of a defense is, nevertheless, a fact greatly appreciated by the former Soviet Union, as evidenced by that country's deployment—in violation of the ABM treaty—of as many as 10,000 anti-missile-capable interceptors, many if not all of them nuclear-armed.

Of course, interceptions are most effective if they take place early in a missile's flight, i.e., before its warhead/countermeasure "cloud" has had a chance to disperse widely. The beauty of Aegis systems is that they can be deployed along prospective flight trajectories and thus may be able to achieve interceptions at optimal points, of which the most optimal of all is in the missile's boost phase, before it even deploys its countermeasures. A number of sea-, air-, and space-based technologies are at hand that could enable the United States to provide effective defenses of this kind without resort to nuclear-weapons technology—but only if we are freed from the constraints currently being imposed by what Mr. von Hippel wrongly describes as "cooperative nuclear-arms control."

In answer to William A. Shurcliff, I made a point in my article of noting the difficulty of protecting the United States against "smuggled" weapons of mass destruction. We are already doing a lot, if not yet enough, to address this problem. Seemingly, Mr. Shurcliff favors our doing so, and yet the logic of his position would suggest that we should not spend money on protecting our borders, airspace, and ports as long as we cannot do it perfectly.

Most Americans want their government to do the best possible job of protecting them against all threats. That is what they think their tax dollars are going toward—the common defense. Most are also aware that their government cannot necessarily promise perfection. Unfortunately, altogether too few of them know that it is currently not doing anything to protect them against the real and growing danger of ballistic missiles.

PERHAPS BECAUSE Roger C. Nicholas III worked in the House of Representatives, he was less intimately involved in the drama that played out on the Senate side over the deployment of the Safeguard anti-missile system. As Robert Kaufman recounts in his excellent new biography of Senator Henry M. Jackson (University of Washington Press), this program initially ran into trouble because Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara opposed it. In turn, his opposition (subsequently muted as a result largely of Jackson's pressure on President Lyndon Johnson) spurred efforts in the Senate to terminate the program. Jackson and his allies narrowly prevailed in August 1969 (by a single vote) and again in August 1970. These were the "serious difficulties" to which I was referring.

A single site was built and became operational in 1974 but was shut down shortly thereafter because of its minimal utility and the intensifying opposition on Capitol Hill—the sort of fate that might well await another very limited, very expensive ground-based missile-defense system if one were to be built in Alaska.

Marc W. Schneider and I are in agreement that the principal threat emanating from the inevitable acquisition of long-range ballistic missiles by rogue states is their ability to hold the United States at risk. At a minimum, possession of such weapons would affect calculations of our willingness to defend our interests and allies overseas. The Senate vote to approve Operation Desert Storm in 1990 was extremely close—even though Saddam was thought to lack the capability of attacking us with weapons of mass destruction. How likely is it that the motion would have carried had he been able credibly to threaten such an attack? Had London, Paris, or other allied capitals been vulnerable to such a threat, Margaret Thatcher has observed, there would probably have been no grand coalition.

WHERE MR. Schneider and I may disagree is on whether we can count on the likes of Saddam Hussein, Muammar Qaddafi, and Kim Jong Il to refrain from actually unleashing missiles against us or places we care about. In 1991, Saddam Hussein actually killed American troops with a Scud missile; a while back, Qaddafi launched a crude ballistic missile at a U.S. base in Italy; and North Korea's Kim has shown his willingness to sacrifice millions of his people to starvation in order to ensure that his army and party cadre have full bellies. We need an insurance policy against the danger that one or more of these rogues may decide for their own reasons to take an action that could appear every bit as irrational as Japan's "suicidal" attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor 60 years ago.

Kenneth H. W. Hilborn's letter is but the latest indication that sensible attitudes toward missile defense are finally taking hold even in Canada. Another recent positive sign is that the Canadian navy is now talking about giving its ships anti-missile capabilities.

With respect to the ABM treaty, Mr. Hilborn recommends the "diplomatic formality of withdrawing . . . in accordance with the treaty's own terms." The definitive legal study of the treaty was done by Douglas J. Feith and George Miron

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for the Center for Security Policy. It persuasively argues, on the basis of international legal practice and precedent, that, being based upon certain specific characteristics and capabilities unique to the Soviet Union, such a "personal" treaty had to lapse after the USSR was formally liquidated. The Feith-Miron study can be read on the Center's web site (www.security-policy.org).

As already indicated, I strongly agree with Mr. Hilborn concerning the value of boost-phase defenses. I also take his point about the danger posed by road-mobile ballistic missiles. The prospect of their coming into the inventories of various nations further underscores the need for missile defense in dealing with men who are merely (in Marc Schneider's phrase) "ruthless and evil."

Finally, it is heartening to have the endorsement of Daniel Goure, one of the most thoughtful and highly regarded defense analysts of our time. I concur with most of his observations, demurring only on one point—the desirability of achieving a "grand bargain" with Russia whereby "deep reductions in strategic offensive forces" are exchanged for "major revisions to the ABM treaty." For reasons elucidated in my article and above, I believe the ABM treaty has not only ceased to be legally binding on the United States but has outlived whatever usefulness it may once have had. It is neither wise nor practical to go on subordinating U.S. defense programs to whatever arrangements may suit the Kremlin.

As Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has pointed out, America's planned missile defenses are a threat to no one except those who would use missiles to threaten us and the freedom of our friends and allies. The same, I might add, could be said of our offensive missiles and long-range bombers. For such deterrent purposes, it behooves us to retain a robust offensive posture even as we develop and deploy unfettered and competent anti-missile systems.

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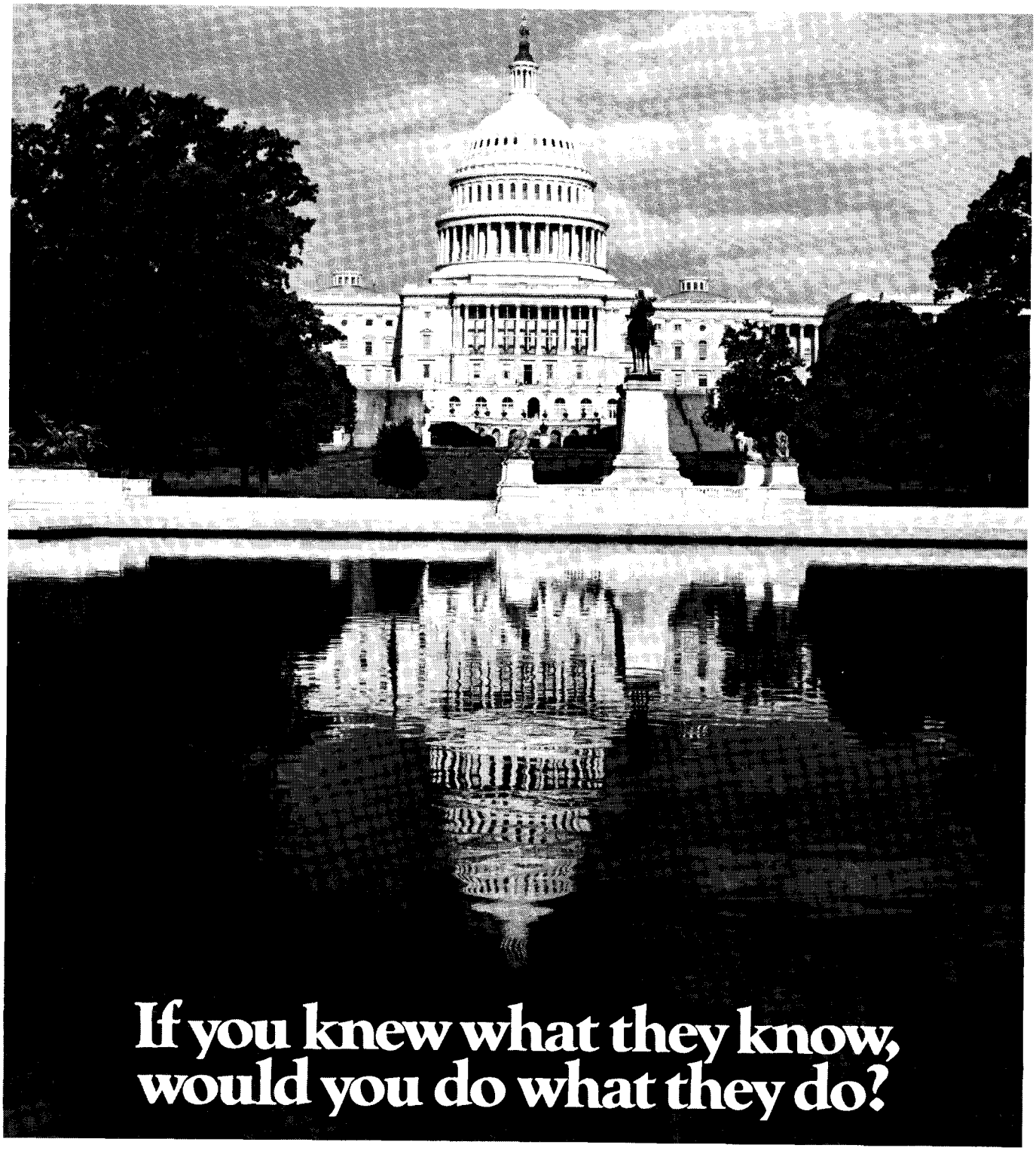

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Commentary
May 2001

The Palestinians and the "Right of Return"

Efraim Karsh

By the early 1990's, most Israelis, on both sides of the political spectrum, had come to embrace a two-state solution to their decades-long conflict with the Palestinian Arabs, a solution based on the idea of trading "land for peace." For these Israelis, and especially for the doves among them, the twilight hours of Ehud Barak's short-lived government came as a terrible shock.

During a span of six months, from the Camp David summit of July 2000 to the Taba talks a few days before his crushing electoral defeat in February 2001, Barak crossed every single territorial "red line" upheld by previous Israeli governments in his frenzied quest for an agreement with the Palestinians based on the formula of land for peace. Unquestioningly accepting the Arab side's interpretation of UN Security Council Resolution 242, passed in the aftermath of the Six-Day war of 1967, Barak's government offered to cede virtually the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip to the nascent Palestinian state, and made breathtaking concessions over Israel's capital city of Jerusalem. But to its amazement, rather than reciprocating this sweepingly comprehensive offer of land with a similarly generous offer of peace, the Palestinians responded with wholesale violence.

At Taba, the Palestinians also insisted, with renewed adamancy, on another non-negotiable condition that had been lying somewhat dormant in the background of the Oslo process begun in 1993. No peace would be possible, they declared, unless Israel guaranteed the right of the Arab refugees of the 1948-49 war, and their descendants, to return to territory that is now part of the state of Israel, and to be compensated financially for lost property and for decades of privation and suffering.

The reintroduction of this issue, at a moment when Israel had effectively agreed to withdraw to its pre-1967 lines, shook the Israeli peace camp to the core. All of a sudden, it seemed that the Arab states and the Palestinians really meant what they had been saying for so long—namely, that peace was not a matter of adjusting borders and territory but was rather a euphemism for eliminating the Jewish state altogether, in this case through demographic subversion. "Implementing the 'right of return' means eradicating Israel," lamented Amos Oz, the renowned author and peace advocate. "It will make the Jewish people a minor ethnic group at the mercy of Muslims, a 'protected minority,' just as fundamentalist Islam would have it."

Oz's plaintive cry struck no responsive chord with his Palestinian counterparts, however. "We as Palestinians do not view our job to safeguard Zionism. It is our job to safeguard our rights," stated the promi-

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nent politician Hanan Ashrawi, vowing to uphold the "right of return" even at the cost of undermining Israel's demographic balance. "The refugee problem," she continued, "has to be solved in total as a central issue of solving the Palestinian question based on the implementation of international law"; for not only has this right of return "never been relinquished or in any way modified," it "has been affirmed annually by the UN member states."

As it happens, Hanan Ashrawi is very much mistaken; and so, in his own way, is Amos Oz. There is no such collective "right of return" to be "implemented." But to grasp what is at issue here requires a deeper look into history, demography, international law, and politics.

II

WHATEVER THE strengths and weaknesses of the Palestinians' legal case, their foremost argument for a "right of return" has always rested on a claim of unprovoked victimhood. In the Palestinians' account, they were and remain the hapless targets of a Zionist grand design to dispossess them from their land, a historical wrong for which they are entitled to redress. In the words of Mahmoud Abbas (a/k/a Abu Mazen), Yasir Arafat's second-in-command and a chief architect of the 1993 Oslo accords: "When we talk about the right of return, we talk about the return of refugees to Israel, because Israel was the one who deported them." The political activist Salman Abu Sitta has put it in even more implacable terms:

> There is nothing like it in modern history. A foreign minority attacking the national majority in its own homeland, expelling virtually all of its population, obliterating its physical and cultural landmarks, planning and supporting this unholy enterprise from abroad, and claiming that this hideous crime is a divine intervention and victory for civilization. This is the largest ethnic-cleansing operation in modern history.

One may be forgiven for pausing a moment at the last sentence. To identify the Palestinian exodus—some 600,000 persons at most—as "the largest ethnic-cleansing operation in modern history" requires at the very least a drastic downgrading of other rather well-documented incidents: the 15 million ethnic Germans forced out of their homes in Eastern Europe after World War II; the millions of Muslims and Hindus fleeing the newly established states of India and Pakistan during the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1948; the millions of Armenians, Greeks, Turks, Finns, Bulgarians, and Kurds, among others, driven from their lands and resettled elsewhere during the 20th century; and so forth and so on.

But put aside the hyperbole. The claim of premeditated dispossession is itself not only baseless, but the inverse of the truth. Far from being the hapless victims of a predatory Zionist assault, the Palestinians were themselves the aggressors in the 1948-49 war, and it was they who attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to "cleanse" a neighboring ethnic community. Had the Palestinians and the Arab world accepted the United Nations resolution of November 29, 1947, calling for the establishment of two states in Palestine, and not sought to subvert it by force of arms, there would have been no refugee problem in the first place.

It is no coincidence that neither Arab propagandists nor Israeli "new historians" have ever produced any evidence of a Zionist master plan to expel the Palestinians during the 1948 war. For such a plan never existed. In accepting the UN partition resolution, the Jewish leadership in Palestine acquiesced in the principle of a two-state solution, and all subsequent deliberations were based on the assumption that Palestine's Arabs would remain as equal citizens in the Jewish state that would arise with the termination of the British mandate. As David Ben-Gurion, soon to become Israel's first prime minister, told the leadership of his Labor (Mapai) party on December 3, 1947: "In our state there will be non-Jews as well—and all of them will be equal citizens; equal in everything without any exception; that is: the state will be their state as well."

In line with this conception, committees laying the groundwork for the nascent Jewish state discussed in detail the establishment of an Arabic-language press, the improvement of health in the Arab sector, the incorporation of Arab officials in the government, the integration of Arabs within the police and the ministry of education, and Arab-Jewish cultural and intellectual interaction. No less importantly, the military plan of the Hagana (the foremost Jewish underground organization in mandatory Palestine) for rebuffing an anticipated pan-Arab invasion was itself predicated, in the explicit instructions of Israel Galilee, the Hagana's commander-in-chief, on the "acknowledgement of the full rights, needs, and freedom of the Arabs in the Hebrew state without any discrimination, and a desire for coexistence on the basis of mutual freedom and dignity."

The Arabs, however, remained unimpressed by

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Jewish protestations of peace and comity. A few days before the passing of the UN partition resolution, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the former mufti of Jerusalem and then head of the Arab Higher Committee (AHC), told an Egyptian newspaper that "we would rather die than accept minority rights" in a prospective Jewish state. The secretary-general of the Arab League, Abd al-Rahman Azzam, promised to "defend Palestine no matter how strong the opposition." "You will achieve nothing with talk of compromise or peace," he told a secret delegation of peace-seeking Zionists in September 1947:

> For us there is only one test, the test of strength. . . . We will try to rout you. I am not sure we will succeed, but we will try. We succeeded in expelling the Crusaders, but lost Spain and Persia, and may lose Palestine. But it is too late for a peaceable solution.

In the event, the threats to abort the birth of Israel by violence heralded the Palestinians' collective undoing. Even before the outbreak of hostilities, many of them had already fled their homes. Still larger numbers left before war reached their doorstep. By April 1948, a month before Israel's declaration of independence, and at a time when the Arabs appeared to be winning the war, some 100,000 Palestinians, mostly from the main urban centers of Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem, and from villages in the coastal plain, had gone. Within another month those numbers had nearly doubled; and by early June, according to an internal Hagana report, some 390,000 Palestinians had left. By the time the war was over in 1949, the number of refugees had risen to between 550,000 and 600,000.

Why did such vast numbers of Palestinians take to the road? There were the obvious reasons commonly associated with war: fear, disorientation, economic privation. But to these must be added the local Palestinians' disillusionment with their own leadership, the role taken by that leadership in *forcing* widespread evacuations, and, perhaps above all, a lack of communal cohesion or of a willingness, especially at the highest levels, to subordinate personal interest to the general good.

On this last point, a number of Palestinians have themselves spoken eloquently. "There was a Belgian ship," recalls Ibrahim Abu Lughod, an academic who fled Jaffa in 1948,

> and one of the sailors, a young man, looked at us—and the ship was full of people from Jaffa, some of us were young adults—and he said: "why don't you stay and fight?" I have never forgotten his face, and I have never had one good answer for him.

Another former resident of Jaffa was the renowned Palestinian intellectual Hisham Sharabi, who in December 1947 left for the United States. Three decades later he asked himself "how we could leave our country when a war was raging and the Jews were gearing themselves to devour Palestine." His answer:

> There were others to fight on our behalf; those who had fought in the 1936 revolt and who would do the fighting in the future. They were peasants . . . [whose] natural place was here, on this land. As for us—the educated ones—we were on a different plane. We were struggling on the intellectual front.

In fact, the Palestinian peasants proved no more attached to the land than the educated classes. Rather than stay behind and fight, they followed in the footsteps of their urban brothers and took to the road from the first moments of the hostilities. Still, the lion's share of culpability for the Palestinian collapse and dispersion does undoubtedly lie with the "educated ones," whose lack of national sentiments, so starkly portrayed by Sharabi and Abu Lughod, set in train the entire Palestinian exodus.

In 1948, both the Jewish and the Arab communities in Palestine were thrown into a whirlpool of hardship, dislocation, and all-out war—conditions that no society can survive without the absolute commitment of its most vital elites. Yet while the Jewish community (or Yishuv), a cohesive national movement, managed to weather the storm by extreme effort, the atomized Palestinian community, lacking an equivalent sense of corporate identity, fragmented into small pieces. The moment its leading members chose to place their own safety ahead of all other considerations, the exodus became a foregone conclusion.

The British High Commissioner for Palestine, General Sir Alan Cunningham, summarized what was happening with quintessential British understatement:

> The collapsing Arab morale in Palestine is in some measure due to the increasing tendency of those who should be leading them to leave the country. . . . In all parts of the country the effendi class has been evacuating in large numbers over a considerable period and the tempo is increasing.

Hussein Khalidi, Secretary of the Arab Higher Committee, was more forthright. "In 1936 there

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were 60,000 [British] troops and [the Arabs] did not fear," he complained to the mufti on January 2, 1948. "Now we deal with 30,000 Jews and [the Arabs] are trembling in fear." Ten days later, he was even more scathing. "Forty days after the declaration of a *jihad*, and I am shattered," he complained to a fellow Palestinian. "Everyone has left me. Six [AHC members] are in Cairo, two are in Damascus—I won't be able to hold on much longer. . . . Everyone is leaving. Everyone who has a check or some money—off he goes to Egypt, to Lebanon, to Damascus."

The desertion of the elites had a stampede effect on the middle classes and the peasantry. But huge numbers of Palestinians were also *driven* out of their homes by their own leaders and/or by Arab military forces, whether out of military considerations or, more actively, to prevent them from becoming citizens of the Jewish state. In the largest and best-known example of such a forced exodus, tens of thousands of Arabs were ordered or bullied into leaving the city of Haifa against their wishes and almost certainly on the instructions of the Arab Higher Committee, despite sustained Jewish efforts to convince them to stay.* Only days earlier, thousands of Arabs in Tiberias had been similarly forced out by their own leaders. In Jaffa, the largest Arab community of mandatory Palestine, the municipality organized the transfer of thousands of residents by land and sea, while in the town of Beisan, in the Jordan valley, the women and children were ordered out as the Arab Legion dug in. And then there were the tens of thousands of rural villagers who were likewise forced out of their homes by order of the AHC, local Arab militias, or the armies of the Arab states.

None of this is to deny that Israeli forces did on occasion expel Palestinians. But this occurred not within the framework of a premeditated plan but in the heat of battle, and was dictated predominantly by ad-hoc military considerations (notably the need to deny strategic sites to the enemy if there were no available Jewish forces to hold them). Even the largest of these expulsions—during the battle over the town of Lydda in July 1948—emanated from a string of unexpected developments on the ground and was in no way foreseen in military plans for the capture of the town. Finally, whatever the extent of the Israeli expulsions, they accounted for only a small fraction of the total exodus.

It is true that neither the Arab Higher Committee nor the Arab states envisaged a Palestinian dispersion of this extent, and that both sought to contain it once it began snowballing. But it is no less true that they acted in a way that condemned hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to exile. In early March 1948, the AHC issued a circular castigating the flight out of the country as a blemish on both "the *jihad* movement and the reputation of the Palestinians," and stating that "in places of great danger, women, children, and the elderly should be moved to safer areas" within Palestine. But only a week later, the AHC was evidently allowing those same categories of persons to leave Jerusalem for Lebanon, and also ordering the removal of women and children from Haifa. By late April, nothing remained of the AHC's stillborn instruction as Transjordan threw its doors open to the mass arrival of Palestinian women and children and the Arab Legion was given a free hand to carry out population transfers at its discretion.

MUHAMMAD NIMR al-Khatib, a prominent Palestinian leader during the 1948 war, summed up his nation's dispersion in these words: "The Palestinians had neighboring Arab states which opened their borders and doors to the refugees, while the Jews had no alternative but to triumph or to die."

That is true as far as it goes—yet it severely underplays the extent of mutual recrimination between the Palestinians and their supposed saviors. From the moment of their arrival in the "neighboring Arab states which opened their borders and doors," tension between the refugees and the host societies ran high. The former considered the states derelict for having issued wild promises of military support on which they never made good. The latter regarded the Palestinians as a cowardly lot who had shamefully deserted their homeland while expecting others to fight for them.

This mutual animosity was also manifest within Palestine itself, where the pan-Arab volunteer force that entered the country in early 1948 found itself at loggerheads with the community it was supposed to defend. Denunciations and violent clashes were common, with the local population often refusing to provide the Arab Liberation Army with the basic necessities for daily upkeep and military operations, and army personnel abusing their Palestinian hosts, of whom they were openly contemptuous. When an Iraqi officer in Jerusalem was asked to explain his persistent refusal to greet the local populace, he angrily retorted that "one doesn't greet these dodging dogs, whose cowardice causes poor Iraqis to die."

* I have recounted the Haifa story at some length in "Were the Palestinians Expelled?," COMMENTARY, July-August 2000.

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The Palestinians did not hesitate to reply in kind. In an interview with the London *Telegraph* in August 1948, the Palestinian leader Emile Ghoury blamed not Israel but the Arab states for the creation of the refugee problem; so did the organizers of protest demonstrations that took place in many West Bank towns on the first anniversary of Israel's establishment. During a fact-finding mission to Gaza in June 1949, Sir John Troutbeck, head of the British Middle East office in Cairo and no friend to Israel or the Jews, was surprised to discover that while the refugees

> express no bitterness against the Jews (or for that matter against the Americans or ourselves) they speak with the utmost bitterness of the Egyptians and other Arab states. "We know who our enemies are," they will say, and they are referring to their Arab brothers who, they declare, persuaded them unnecessarily to leave their home. . . . I even heard it said that many of the refugees would give a welcome to the Israelis if they were to come in and take the district over.

The prevailing conviction among Palestinians that they had been, and remained, the victims of their fellow Arabs rather than of Israeli aggression was grounded not only in experience but in the larger facts of inter-Arab politics. Indeed, had the Jewish state lost the war, its territory would not have been handed over to the Palestinians but rather divided among the invading forces, for the simple reason that none of the Arab regimes viewed the Palestinians as a distinct nation. Perhaps the clearest sign of this was that neither Egypt nor Jordan allowed Palestinian self-determination in the parts of Palestine they conquered during the 1948 war: respectively, Gaza and the West Bank. As the American academic, Philip Hitti, put the Arab view to a joint British and American committee of inquiry in 1946: "There is no such thing as Palestine in history, absolutely not."

So much for "the largest ethnic-cleansing operation in modern history."

III

BUT THE appeal to history—to what did or did not happen in 1948-49—is only one arrow in the Palestinian quiver. Another is the appeal to international law, and in particular to the United Nations resolution that, as Hanan Ashrawi sternly reminds us, "has been affirmed annually by the UN member states."

The resolution in question, number 194, was passed by the UN General Assembly on December 11, 1948, in the midst of the Arab-Israeli war. The first thing to be noted about it is that, like all General Assembly resolutions (and unlike Security Council resolutions), it is an expression of sentiment and carries no binding force whatsoever. The second thing to be noted is that its primary purpose was not to address the refugee problem but rather to create a "conciliation commission" aimed at facilitating a comprehensive peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Only one of its fifteen paragraphs alludes to refugees in general—*not* "Arab refugees"—in language that could as readily apply to the hundreds of thousands of Jews who were then being driven from the Arab states in revenge for the situation in Palestine.

This interpretation is not merely fanciful. The resolution expressly stipulates that compensation for the property of those refugees choosing *not* to return "should be made good by the governments or the authorities responsible." Had the provision applied only to Palestinians, Israel would surely have been singled out as the compensating party; instead, the wording clearly indicates that Arab states were likewise seen as potential compensators of refugees created by them.

Most importantly, far from recommending the return of the Palestinian refugees as the only viable solution, Resolution 194 put this particular option on a par with resettlement elsewhere. It advocated, in its own words, that "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date," but also that efforts should be made to facilitate the "resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation of the refugees."

It was, indeed, just these clauses in Resolution 194 that, at the time, made it anathema to the Arabs, who opposed it vehemently and voted unanimously against it. Linking resolution of the refugee issue to the achievement of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace; placing on the Arab states some of the burden for resolving it; equating return and resettlement as possible solutions, and diluting any preference for the former by means of the vague phrase, "at the earliest practicable date"; and above all establishing no absolute "right of return," the measure was seen, correctly, as rather less than useful to Arab purposes.

Only in the late 1960's, and with the connivance of their Soviet and third-world supporters, did the Arabs begin to transform Resolution 194 into the cornerstone of an utterly spurious legal claim to a

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"right of return," buttressing it with thinly argued and easily refutable appeals to other international covenants on the treatment of refugees and displaced persons. Today, after decades of fervent Palestinian rejection of the very idea of living "at peace with their neighbors," the most that can be said of those who invoke the language of Resolution 194 is that they are being disingenuous—though stronger and more accurate words also come to mind.

IV

AND THE refugees themselves? As is well-known, they were kept in squalid camps for decades as a means of derogating Israel in the eyes of the West and arousing pan-Arab sentiments. And there large numbers of them have remained, with the conspicuous exception of those allowed to settle and take citizenship in Jordan.

At the end of the 1948-49 war, the Israeli government set the number of Palestinian refugees at 550,000-600,000; the research department of the British Foreign Office leaned toward the higher end of this estimate. But within a year, as large masses of people sought to benefit from the unprecedented influx of international funds to the area, some 914,000 alleged refugees had been registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

More than a half-century later, these exaggerated initial numbers have swollen still further: as of June 2000, according to UNRWA, the total had climbed close to three and three-quarters million. Of course, UNRWA itself admits that the statistics are inflated, since they "are based on information voluntarily supplied by refugees primarily for the purpose of obtaining access to Agency services." (The numbers also include close to a million-and-a-half Jordanian citizens.) But the PLO, for its part, has set a still higher figure of 5 million refugees, claiming that many have never registered with UNRWA.

Aside from demanding an unconditional right of return for these individuals, Palestinian spokesmen have calculated that justice will also require monetary "reparations" in the amount of roughly $500 billion—half for alleged material losses, and the rest for lost income, psychological trauma, and non-material losses. To this figure would also be added the hundreds of billions to be claimed by the refugees' host countries (notably Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan) for services rendered, bringing the total to about $1 trillion.

Needless to say, Israel has challenged UNRWA's figures, not to speak of the PLO's; it has unofficially estimated the current number of refugees and their families at closer to 2 million. But even if the more restrictive Israeli figures were to be accepted, it is certainly true, just as Amos Oz darkly predicts, that the influx of these refugees into the Jewish state would irrevocably transform its demographic composition. At the moment, Jews constitute about 79 percent of Israel's 6-million-plus population, a figure that would rapidly dwindle to under 60 percent. Given the Palestinians' far higher birth rate, the implementation of a "right of return," even by the most conservative estimates, would be tantamount to Israel's destruction.

Not that this stark scenario should surprise anyone. As early as October 1949, the Egyptian politician Muhammad Salah al-Din, soon to become his country's foreign minister, wrote in the influential Egyptian daily *al-Misri* that "in demanding the restoration of the refugees to Palestine, the Arabs intend that they shall return as the masters of the homeland and not as slaves. More specifically, they intend to annihilate the state of Israel."

In subsequent years, this frank understanding of what the "right of return" was all about would be reiterated by most Arab leaders, from Gamal Abdel Nasser, to Hafez al-Assad, to Yasir Arafat. Only during the 1990's did the PLO temporarily elide the issue as it concentrated on gaining control of the territories vacated by Israel as part of the Oslo peace process. Its Israeli interlocutors, for their part, chose to think of the "right of return" as a PLO bargaining chip, to be reserved for talks on a final-status settlement and then somehow disposed of symbolically or through a token gesture of good will (such as by conceding some degree of Israeli "practical"—but not "moral"—responsibility for the 1948-49 exodus).

Throughout the 1990's, successive academic study groups, made up of the most earnestly forthcoming Israelis and the most grudgingly tractable Palestinians, devoted themselves to formulating a compromise proposal on this issue. They all failed—a fact that should have raised a large warning flag, but did not, even though the reason for the failure was plain enough. For the "right of return" is, for the Palestinians, not a bargaining chip; it is the heart of the matter.

That is why, over the decades, other perfectly commendable Israeli gestures toward dealing with the plight of the refugees have consistently met with indifference or rebuff. In 1949, Israel offered to take back 100,000 Palestinian refugees; the Arab

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states refused. Nevertheless, some 50,000 refugees *have* returned over the decades under the terms of Israel's family-reunification program, and another 75,000 who were displaced from the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 war have also returned to those territories. As Alexander Safian of CAMERA has documented, 90,000 Palestinians have also been allowed to gain residence in territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority since the beginning of the Oslo process. Safian similarly points out that millions have been paid by Israel in settlement of individual claims of lost property—"despite the fact that not a single penny of compensation has ever been paid to any of the more than 500,000 Jewish refugees from Arab countries."

Indeed, if one were to insist on the applicability of international law, here is one instance where it speaks unequivocally. In 1948-49, the Palestinians and Arab states launched a war of aggression against the Jewish community and the newly-proclaimed state of Israel, in the process driving out from their territories hundreds of thousands of innocent Jews and seizing their worldly goods. Ever since, these same aggressors have been suing to be made whole for the consequences of their own failed aggression. Imagine a defeated Nazi Germany demanding reparations from Britain and the United States, or Iraq demanding compensation for losses it suffered during the 1991 Gulf war. Both legally and morally, the idea is grotesque.

But in the end none of this matters. What is at issue in the dispute over the "right of return" is not practicality, not demography, not legality, and certainly not history. What is at issue is not even the refugees themselves, shamefully left in homelessness and destitution, and nourished on hatred and false dreams, while all over the world tens of millions of individuals in similar or much worse straits have been resettled and have rebuilt their lives. What is at issue is quite simply the existence of Israel—or rather, to put it in the more honest terms of Muhammed Salah al-Din, the still vibrant hope among many Arabs and Palestinians of annihilating that existence, if not by one means then by another.

Tactically, "we may win or lose," declared Faysal al-Husseini, the "moderate" minister for Jerusalem affairs in Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Authority, in late March of this year; "but our eyes will continue to aspire to the strategic goal, namely, to Palestine from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea"—that is, to a Palestine in place of an Israel. "Whatever we get now," he continued, "cannot make us forget this supreme truth." Until this "supreme truth" is buried once and for all, no amount of Israeli good will, partial compensation, or symbolic acceptance of responsibility can hope to create anything but an appetite for more.

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Among the Gentlemen-Publishers

Joseph Epstein

Is publishing a business, or is it a gentleman's profession? For anyone who has ever had anything to do with the production of serious books, the answer to this perennial question is simple. It is neither—neither rational nor genteel. 'Twas, perhaps, ever thus. In the 1790's, Georg Christof Lictenberg, the German physicist and aphorist, wrote: "There can hardly be stranger wares in the world than books: printed by people who do not understand them; sold by people who do not understand them; bound, reviewed, and read by people who do not understand them; and now even written by people who do not understand them."

The late James Laughlin, founder and for many years principal editor of the avant-garde firm of New Directions, was once asked if it was possible to make money in publishing. "It can be done," he replied, "if you have enough bad taste to do it." Many people working in publishing today would no doubt agree, and with something like the same condescension. To others, the entire industry is in so precipitous a decline—no mere slippery slope but a grand slalom—that not even the most confident bad taste will suffice to reverse its fortunes.

Among such people, the talk today is about conglomerates "swallowing" once distinguished publishing firms and insisting on a profit margin of between 15 and 20 percent in a business that previously lived with profits of 4 or 5 percent. Where once it was understood that commercially popular books would "carry" more intellectually sophisticated and literary books, and publishers could await the slow accumulation of revenues from titles retained in the inventory and known as "backlist," publishing is currently now said to be a serve-and-volley game, and if a book fails to get to the net quickly, it will not be allowed to make it at all. Good—possibly great—books are being degraded in importance, if not entirely ignored, or so it is argued.

To compound matters, there is the "corporate seizure" of independent booksellers. Fewer than a fifth of the books sold in America are marketed outside the great chains—Barnes & Noble and Borders most prominently—and the Internet, with consequences no less dire than in publishing itself. Independent bookstores once functioned as conduits for word-of-mouth sales, by which means good books not heavily promoted by their publishers still had a chance to find respectable readerships. In transactions with her customers, averred one member of the vanishing tribe of independent booksellers in a recent symposium on the future of publishing in the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, "it is only the three of us, the writer, the reader and the bookseller who define value." Elsewhere, by implication, big money is in the saddle, the values

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Joseph Epstein, *a longtime contributor, is the author of ten books of essays, of which the most recent is* Narcissus Leaves the Pool, *and a collection of short stories,* The Goldin Boys. *His article "Intellectuals—Public and Otherwise," appeared in our May 2000 issue.*

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of entertainment and low-grade culture hold the reins, and literature, the intellectual life, and democracy itself are in danger of being trampled in the stampede.

People with good jobs in publishing tend to eschew such doomy prognostications. "Frankly, I'm getting a little annoyed at the assumption that it's now 'fairly impossible' to publish difficult but yet important writing," notes Robert D. Loomis, a vice president at Random House, in the *Los Angeles Times* symposium. "A lot has changed, most of it technical (and much of that for the better), but things remain greatly the same," adds Robert Gottlieb, formerly of the firm of Alfred A. Knopf and editor of the *New Yorker*: "Conglomerates haven't stifled individual publishing or the publishing of books of quality—in fact, both fiction and nonfiction of quality tends to sell better today than comparable books did years ago."

According to still a third position, things are indeed falling apart, but, like the cavalry in a cowboys-and-Indians movie, help looms just over the horizon. The new technologies of book distribution, playing the role of those pony soldiers of yesteryear, will save the day. In the magical world a-borning, we shall be able to draw books from our computers as easily as we now draw cash from automatic teller machines. "We may have high-speed, in-home printing, which will enable consumers to order directly," writes the agent Morton Janklow, "but that will expand literary sales and not diminish them, and the market will adjust and adapt to these changes as markets in free societies always have."

EXEMPLIFYING SOME of these conflicting attitudes are recent books by André Schiffrin* and Jason Epstein,† two longtime editor-publishers. Both men look back on their experience in the spirit not so much of searching for as of regretting times past. Both have known publishing in what they would agree were intellectually palmier days: Epstein at Random House, where for many years he served as editorial director, and Schiffrin at Pantheon, where he was managing director until a corporate shakeup in 1990. Disagreeing about many things, the two agree that much of the idealism, and with it the deep intellectual pleasure, has gone out of mainstream publishing in America.

The son of a well-known European publisher, André Schiffrin may be said to have gone into the family business. Born in 1935, he began work at the paperback firm of New American Library, for which he proposed a line of serious books known as Signet. He joined Pantheon in 1962 at the age of twenty-six, and a year later became editorial director, with complete freedom to publish what he pleased.

What Schiffrin chiefly pleased to publish were books dealing in what he delicately calls "political education": that is to say, leftism. Educated at Cambridge, and with international connections owed to his father, he brought in European heavyweights such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, E. P. Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm, and E. H. Carr, and such Americans as Noam Chomsky, Staughton Lynd, Studs Terkel, *e tutti quanti*. He also published the early work of the historian Eugene Genovese—though, as he writes, he subsequently became "saddened" by Genovese's "sectarian excesses" (for which read: growing dubiety concerning left-wing ideas).

Schiffrin's critique of the publishing business is in line with his politics: he sees it, pure and simple, as a victim of the depredations of capitalism on the loose. Once upon a time, in Schiffrin's version, publishers could pride themselves "on their ability to balance the imperative of making money with that of issuing serious books." Now, what has taken over is a belief in the unfettered free market, "a sort of consumer democracy" that has inevitably destroyed the industry as a genuine force in the intellectual life of the country. Worse, all too many of Schiffrin's fellow publishers have gone along for the ride. Among those he accuses of selling out and going "downmarket" is, in particular, Random House, Pantheon's parent company, and its allegedly highbrow division of Knopf; Alberto Vitale, the man who was brought in to take over and who presided over Schiffrin's departure, is skewered as having "a thuggish disposition and a thoroughly anti-intellectual attitude."

Schiffrin, who now runs the New Press, a nonprofit house largely supported by foundations, is keen for antitrust legislation to stop the conglomerates. He even believes that government itself should support publishing (forgetting, apparently, the possibilities for censorship that might thereby be unleashed). Not for him the paradox that others of us manage to live with, believing in the efficacy of market forces while sometimes, in the case of culture, lamenting their effects. In the seeming victory of "the application of the market theory to culture," much, he writes, if not everything, stands to be lost:

> [If] the domain of ideas is surrendered to those who want to make the most money, then the

* *The Business of Books*. Verso, 181 pp., $23.00.

† *Book Business: Publishing Past, Present, and Future*. Norton, 188 pp., $21.95.

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debate that is so essential for a functioning democracy will not take place. To a large extent it is this silence that has overtaken much of American intellectual life.

By "silence," Schiffrin has something specific in mind: the end of the 60's- and 70's-style leftism that permitted him to flourish as a publisher. Contemporary leftism has of course taken a different turn from the old up-with-the-oppressed, down-with-the-capitalists sloganizing in which so many Pantheon books offered the reader a good sentimental soak. But that hardly means leftist attitudes themselves have disappeared from the "domain of ideas," let alone from the particular portfolio of ideas carried, ironically enough, by "those who want to make the most money." About all this, however, Schiffrin seems not to have a clue.

SOMEONE WITH more than a clue is Jason Epstein, another publishing figure who veers decidedly leftward but who has never allowed that to distract him from the pursuit of the good life or the making of money—or, as *Book Business* confirms, from the (suitably low-key) tooting of his own horn.

In 1950, deciding as a newly minted graduate of Columbia College that he had the vocation neither for scholarship nor for "the agonies of creation," Epstein began a career in publishing at the firm of Doubleday. "My ambition was evangelical," he writes. "I wanted to share with the world the literary euphoria I had enjoyed at Columbia College. In those days I thought of myself as a missionary." But Doubleday, dominated by salesmen and deriving much of its profit from the book clubs it owned, served other gods than the one worshipped by the young missionary.

Then Jason Epstein had a great notion. At the age of twenty-two, he conceived the idea of putting out serious books in "quality" paperback editions. Thus was born Anchor Books. Thanks to rising university enrollments, and to the low prices at which such paperbacks could then be produced and marketed (between 65¢ and $1.25 per volume), they were a hit straight out of the gate. In the mid-1950's, I first read Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, and Stendhal in Anchor editions, and I remember a fellow student at the University of Chicago, a would-be writer on an F. Scott Fitzgerald plan of inspiration-through-alcohol, showing me a prose poem with the line, "In my dream the floor is covered with martinis and Anchor Books."

Once Anchor Books caught on, Epstein needed to dwell no longer among the lowly vulgar in publishing. He was acclaimed the Robespierre of the paperback revolution—a title, it must be said, to which there are almost as many claimants as alleged inventors of the jumpshot in basketball. Lifted out of the stewpots of Doubleday, he was soon given a place at the head table at Random House, and his paperback days were over. (In more than a single sense: once he came into serious green, we learn here, he would purchase only hardcover books for his own library.)

Over the decades, Epstein has been responsible for other successful "start-ups," including the Anchor Bible, which has brought out scholarly editions of the books in the biblical canon, and the Library of America, a useful collection of American writers modeled on the Pléiade editions published by the firm of Gallimard in Paris. During the New York newspaper strike of 1962, Epstein and his then wife Barbara, together with Elizabeth Hardwick and her then husband Robert Lowell, conceived the idea for the *New York Review of Books*. Although he claims he took no direct editorial hand, he retained voting shares in the enterprise and, when the journal was sold, "participated" (amusing word) in the profits.*

As for his analysis of the publishing scene, in *Book Business* Epstein provides what William Dean Howells once said every American wants in his entertainment: a tragedy with a happy ending. First the tragedy. Telling the tale of the vulgarization of publishing in his lifetime, he duly recounts the "demoralizing inversion of values" whereby the "more commercially oriented hardcover houses [have] assumed the characteristics of paperback mass marketers," the replacement of publishers and editors by agents as the key figures in the lives of writers, the rise of the chain booksellers, and the rest. "Many valuable books," he writes, "tend to be slighted in the triage of contemporary book publishing," and although good or even slightly obscure books do continue to get published, finding them is no longer easy, and for the uninitiated can be all but impossible.

That is certainly so. I recently attempted to obtain one such small-audience book, *The Immortal*

* Over the years Epstein has also been a steady contributor to the *New York Review*, often of ex-cathedra pronouncements on the state of the economy that sound as if written by a poor man's Felix Rohatyn. Early in *Book Business*, he records his "regret" over his own "Falstaffian disdain" for the making of money. "Ah, yes!" noted the French writer Jules Renard in his *Journals* (1925-27), "to be a socialist and make a lot of money." Although Epstein explicitly disavows being a socialist, *bien pensant* types like him always, somehow, seem to end up with excellent seats at the opera.

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Dinner by Pamela Hughes-Hallett, which concerns a dinner party in 1817 among the Romantics at the studio of the painter Benjamin Robert Haydon. Although published by the mainstream firm of Viking, it was in stock neither at the two Barnes & Nobles nor at the one Borders I consulted, and had to be ordered from the publisher. The industry joke used to be that the shelf life of a new book was somewhere between that of milk and yogurt, a joke Epstein says is now considered too realistic to be funny. Any so-called quality paperback that sells fewer than 2,000 copies a year, it is said, is likely to be sent to the pulper, the equivalent for books of the glue factory for horses. "Publishers and booksellers did not choose this dance of death," Epstein writes, "but neither partner can escape the other's embrace."

And yet, in a notable shift of tone, *Book Business* quickly moves from threnody to dithyramb. Citing Marx's idea that "new technologies transform cultures"—an idea that, he says, still seems true "even if [Marx's] revolutionary fantasies" failed to pan out—Epstein proceeds to rhapsodize in the purest digibabble about the marvelous future to be brought to us by the computer and the Internet:

> [T]he web will be more than a platform from which books are promoted and sold. Some books will be composed interactively on the web and others will be compiled to order from random sources and delivered electronically in a single package or in periodic recisions. Employees transferred to new locations in Seattle, Nairobi, Taipei, or Poughkeepsie can be given compilations from several sources by their companies on local conditions, history, and facilities and access to a web site that will answer additional questions as they arise. Interactive curricula can be transmitted from a single site to students in distant places. So can medical, legal, and financial advice be addressed interactively to individual users. . . .

Thanks to these and other innovations, Epstein's closing pages report, old publishing tyrannies will be overcome, new publishing opportunities will arise, and all obstacles (rather like the state in the Marxist dialectic) will wither away.

NOT, ALAS, likely to happen any time soon. As David Gelernter wrote recently in COMMENTARY,* the new technological possibilities unleashed by the endemic use of computers and talk of a global economy have fed the conviction that we are on the cusp of a new era, a conviction that is largely a fantasy. AtRandom.com, the electronic-book imprint launched to tremendous fanfare by Random House last summer, has so far proved a colossal failure, and throughout the industry the enthusiasm for this form of publishing is markedly on the wane. In the words of one disappointed author quoted in the *New York Observer*, "I do think there is a future for e-books. But there is no present for e-books."

In the closing pages of *his* book, André Schiffrin brands Jason Epstein as naive in his hopes for an improvement in the conditions of publishing through the Internet. Instead of helping matters, Schiffrin writes balefully, "the Internet may well accelerate the process" of decline.

Whether or not Schiffrin is right about that, it is certainly true that the changes that both he and Epstein lament have been in place for some time. Their beginning can be dated, with some precision, to October 1959, when Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer of Random House took their privately owned firm public, selling its stock at 11¼ a share, soon to rise to 45. This enormous gain was what allowed them to buy the then-independent firm of Alfred A. Knopf and, a bit later, Pantheon.

In 1966, Random House and its satellite firms were themselves bought by RCA, and soon other publishing houses began to be taken over by larger corporations with something like the ease of Grant sweeping through Richmond: Simon & Schuster by Gulf & Western, Putnam's by Universal-MCA, New American Library by the Times-Mirror Company, and so forth. Today, only two major houses—W. W. Norton and Houghton Mifflin—remain unowned by much bigger corporations.

At the time, these corporations believed that the publishing firms would help them flourish in the imminent "knowledge explosion" that would see more and more school children requiring more and more books. The great knowledge explosion proved a dud—which did not stop even larger media giants (Time-Warner, Disney, Rupert Murdoch, S.I. Newhouse) from the rush to purchase.

Why they were attracted to publishing remains something of a mystery. It may have been for the prestige, or for possible entertainment tie-ins, or for reasons known only to them. But it could not have been for the money. For a while, as Michael Korda remarks in *Another Life* (1999), his own memoir of a career in publishing, all of it at Simon & Schuster, it seemed that "the real money in books was going to be made not by writing or pub-

* "Computers and the Pursuit of Happiness," January 2001.

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lishing the damn things but by buying and selling the publishing companies themselves."

Did the conglomerates know, one wonders, about the crippling conditions of consignment under which publishers supplied their products to bookstores: returnable, like so many greeting cards, if unsold? ("Gone today," Alfred Knopf is supposed to have remarked about books shipped under this arrangement, "here tomorrow.") Were they aware of the intellectual drag imposed by the ethos of the prestigious houses, according to which the quality of a book was supposed to take precedence over its potential profitability?

BUT DESPITE the failure to turn a real profit, the brisk trade in publishing houses did decisively transform the tenor of the industry, and not least for those who worked in it as editors. Not much money was ever made by these editors. Nor was much money usually made by writers, with the exception of that small number who had mastered the trick of regularly producing best-sellers by formulaic scribbling. Instead, serious publishers always traveled under the banner of that peculiar cultural schizophrenia I remarked upon at the outset: gentleman's profession, or just plain business? In some houses, the schizophrenia was carried to an extreme, and the operating credo—junkier books were the price to be paid for more serious ones—could give way to a ban on junky books altogether. Alfred Knopf is said to have refused to publish a diet book, subsequently a runaway bestseller, even though its author was his personal physician. "Does this deserve the Borzoi imprint?" he would ask portentously whenever a third-rate book was proposed.

Publishing houses of an earlier day were institutions in which a high premium was put on loyalty. Editors were willing to work their entire careers at the same firm just as professors, similarly low-paid, stayed at the same university. Editing was sometimes thought to be university teaching by other means: both jobs carried the prestige of membership in the cultural clerisy. Authors, too, even the most famous and commercially successful ones, tended to show fealty to the firm that published them when young. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway never left Scribner, a house that stayed in the black for decades by reprinting these two writers for college courses.

Nowadays, both editors and authors change firms with an insouciance once unthinkable. When, a few years ago, I decided to leave the firm of Norton upon the retirement of my editor there, I was read a very stern sermonette on the subject of loyalty by the editor who had replaced her—and who, I was later pleased to learn, himself left for another firm within two weeks. Meanwhile, the editor who had encouraged me to move to Houghton Mifflin left that house just as the ink—and it was a ballpen—was drying on my new contract. Loyalty, in publishing as elsewhere, is no longer to institutions but only to persons, and the person in question is usually oneself.

Each of the major firms once had its own character and cachet: Random House stood for a not wholly unserious glamor as represented by such writers as John O'Hara and Truman Capote; Farrar, Straus & Giroux for international distinction (Primo Levi, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Joseph Brodsky) *cum* New York chic (Robert Lowell, Mary McCarthy, Susan Sontag); Knopf for American history and literature, beginning with H. L. Mencken and Willa Cather and running through to Walker Percy and John Updike; Pantheon, as we have seen, for left-wing earnestness; Doubleday for thumping best-sellers of a commercial kind. But, this, too, is now on the way out, as individual firms begin to blur and each seems less distinctive.

Finally, an element of idealism was also traditionally part of publishing—especially, again, at the editors' level. (The publishers themselves were often a different matter, men whose intellectual shortcomings were matched only by their ambitions, social and otherwise.) Every profession has its heroic figure—William Osler in medicine, Clarence Darrow in law—and in publishing that figure was Maxwell Perkins (1884-1947). Working at Scribner, Perkins was the discoverer and encourager of F. Scott Fitzgerald and, through Fitzgerald, of Ernest Hemingway, and the absolute savior of Thomas Wolfe, whose novels he cut and shaped and made publishable. Selflessness distinguished Perkins, the willingness to submerge his own ego and put all his efforts into improving the work of another in the name of something greater than both.

As a psychoanalyst is said to be a Jewish boy who cannot stand the sight of blood, so in the past half-century many a successful book editor has been a boy, Jewish or not, who could not stand the solitude of writing. David Segal, Henry Robbins, Robert Gottlieb, Michael Korda, and my own first editor Hal Scharlatt are among those who have enjoyed a certain fame in this regard, albeit of an intramural kind. Scharlatt's brilliance with a manuscript was genuine, and he was also talented at creating excitement for books that did not yet exist except in the writer's mind. He died, at thirty-eight, of a heart attack while playing tennis after, it is said, lunch in a French restaurant. A real book editor's death.

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In the end, none of the changes that have overtaken the industry, nor even the analyses of them offered by André Schiffrin and Jason Epstein, can account for what may be the central issue facing serious publishers. In the most intelligent response in the *Los Angeles Times* symposium, Marian Wood, a vice president of Putnam, after eschewing the Candidean fantasy of paradise on the Internet, goes on to conclude that "the biggest problem is keeping reading alive as a passion—and finding ways to reach those passionate readers with the news of a great new writer." This, problem, too, is hardly new, but it has been made much more challenging by the difficulties that publishers encounter in producing, and readers in obtaining, high-quality books with a respectably long life in bookstores or on backlists, and by the increased number of new diversions set out before the young.

In his *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man* (1943), published long before the decline I have been chronicling, the journalist Albert Jay Nock strikingly attributed what *he* saw as a decline in publishing to, of all things, increased literacy in America. In his own childhood, Nock argued, the quality of magazine- and book-publishing was much higher than it had become in his old age. For literacy was no guarantee of true reading—what Nock called "the use of the reflective faculty"—and in the decades since his youth the market had been watered down by editors and publishers trying to attract people who could read in the technical sense but not really think. A literary Greshamite, Nock asserted that, in those earlier days, "publishers were not under such economic pressure to block up the access to good literature with trash."

Nock was talking about the spread of mere literacy. But we now have the spread of so-called higher education, an exercise in which something on the order of 65 percent of Americans take part. Yet anyone who has had anything to do with higher education in America knows how little it does to develop reflective readers. From my experience as a teacher of English at one of our putatively better universities, I can attest that most students manage to get through quite nicely without cultivating a taste, let alone a passion, for books.

In the meantime, while higher education turns out to have fallen a lot lower than anyone ever expected, the world has put up many additional distractions to the deeply private pleasure of reading books. Whatever our progress in medicine, engineering, communication, the number of thoughtful people is probably proportionately no greater now than it was a century ago. After the revolution, Leon Trotsky wrote in *Literature and Revolution*, "the average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise." Perhaps they already have, but sitting atop these peaks you might find college students playing Nintendo while their parents are watching, on television, XFL football and *Sex and the City*.

From this perspective, the wonder may well be not that so few serious books continue to be published in this country, but so many. This is a real paradox, one that is too rich for the leaden discriminations of an André Schiffrin or even a Jason Epstein. Not that I am better equipped to explain it; but as a reader, and as a writer, I have cause to be grateful for it every day.

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Air-Crash Cover-Up?

Didier de Fontaine

On the evening of July 17, 1996, TWA flight 800, a Boeing 747-100 bound for Paris, took off from JFK international airport in New York. Twelve minutes later, as the plane traversed the southern coast of Long Island and climbed to an altitude of 13,700 feet, it exploded in a tremendous fireball, broke up into two pieces, and fell into the Atlantic seven miles from shore, killing all 230 passengers and crew on board.

Two years and two months later, Swissair flight 111, a McDonnell-Douglas aircraft, left JFK en route to Geneva. As the plane made its way up the eastern seaboard, the pilots noticed smoke in the cockpit and asked permission for an emergency landing. They did not succeed in bringing the plane safely to the ground. At approximately 9:30 PM on September 2, 1998, Swissair 111 plunged into the sea off the coast of Nova Scotia, taking the lives of the 229 people aboard.

One year and one month later, on October 31, 1999, EgyptAir flight 990, a Boeing 767, took off from JFK en route to Cairo. After flying in an easterly direction for 31 minutes, it crashed into the Atlantic Ocean south of the island of Nantucket. The 217 passengers and crew all perished.

The TWA and EgyptAir crashes were the subjects of exhaustive investigations led by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) in conjunction with a range of other governmental agencies and private firms. Because Swissair 111 crashed in Canadian waters, the Canadian Safety Board conducted a no less thorough inquiry into that accident.

The NTSB determined that the TWA 800 crash was the result of an explosion in the central-wing fuel tank. Although the exact cause could not be definitively identified, the board suggested that defective or damaged wiring had short-circuited, causing the ignition of gasoline fumes in the nearly empty tank. Swissair 111 was found to have similarly suffered equipment failure, in this case causing a fire that began somewhere in the cockpit. Owing in large measure to the extreme difficulty of recovering aircraft fragments scattered across the ocean floor, the precise origins of the blaze remain obscure, though a short circuit in the cabin map light has been identified as a likely possibility. As for EgyptAir 990, no evidence of equipment failure was found. All indications pointed in another direction entirely: pilot suicide.

Those, at least, are the official explanations of the three disasters. But another possibility has also been raised: namely, that what brought down *all three* civilian aircraft was electromagnetic interference (EMI), generated by U.S. military installations and vessels. This sensational and disturbing theory is associated above all with the name of Elaine Scarry, a professor at Harvard who over the

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last three years has published a series of lengthy and heavily footnoted articles on the aviation disasters in the *New York Review of Books*. What makes Scarry's work all the more intriguing is that she is a professor not of physics or engineering but of literature—or rather, to give her full title, of "Aesthetics and Value Theory." This fact, among others, may account for the wide attention she has received for her ideas, including an adoring profile in the *New York Times Magazine* last November.

Scarry turned her attention to aviation disasters after stumbling upon a news article reporting that a number of U.S. army helicopters may have crashed after having encountered EMI emitted by nearby military aircraft. This report came to her with the force of an epiphany. "Immediately," according to the author of the *Times Magazine* article, "she thought of TWA Flight 800. . . . Could EMI from military ships and planes in the vicinity of TWA Flight 800 have taken down the plane?" To find out, Scarry began immersing herself in the literature of EMI. After spending months with government reports and engineering and military journals, and assimilating a vast body of highly technical information, she concluded that the government's inquiries had utterly failed to ask the right questions.

In her first article for the *New York Review*, "The Fall of TWA 800: The Possibility of Electromagnetic Interference" (April 9, 1998), Scarry began by describing possible EMI-related problems that have plagued military aircraft, and then catalogued the emitters of EMI known to have been located in the vicinity of TWA 800 just as it exploded. "Directly overhead," she wrote,

> was a Navy P3 Orion with its transponder turned off: it was 6,300 feet above the passenger plane and had intersected its longitude and latitude within seconds of the moment the catastrophe began. In the airspace beneath TWA 800 a Black Hawk helicopter and an HC-130 plane were flying at an altitude of 3,000 feet: they were five miles north of the commercial liner. A Coast Guard cutter rescue ship, the *Adak*, was somewhere on the sea below, its precise location in relation to the falling plane unspecified in the official record but given in news reports as nine to twelve miles south. One hundred and eighty-five miles to the southwest was an Aegis cruiser, the USS Normandy: that mileage places it off Maryland's Eastern Shore.

These craft, plus an additional five named by Scarry, were all capable of emitting electromagnetic radiation. Together, they "formed a temporary envelope around the passenger plane" that could have interfered with the workings of its electrical systems. Although Scarry refrained from asserting outright that EMI brought down the flight, she held it open as a distinct likelihood and called for a crash program of research:

> The NTSB needs to ask: What equipment [on the military aircraft and vessels in the area] was switched on? What instruments were turned off? What was the sequence of those acts? We need to know the answers to these questions if we are to determine whether electromagnetic interference—a sudden pulsing or spiking in the electronic environment—may have caused TWA 800's electrical systems to go haywire.

In her second article ("Swissair 111, TWA 800, and Electromagnetic Interference," September 21, 2000), Scarry pointed to the numerous similarities between the Swissair and TWA disasters. Some of these similarities were truly striking: both planes had taken off from JFK, both took off on a Wednesday, both took off precisely at 8:19 PM, and both were following the same route. These, she thought, might not be mere coincidences: when an "event recurs at an exact time and place, it may become clear that . . . the problem is arising not from some problem inside the affected piece of equipment but from something outside—something on a regular enough schedule that its responsibility can eventually be tracked down."

What might that something be? Once again, reported Scarry, various military craft, including several P3's and several Navy submarines, were in the area and may well have been engaged in "electronic warfare practice." Although Swissair 111 managed to stay aloft a full hour longer than TWA 800, a mysterious thirteen-minute interruption of radio contact between the plane and ground controllers commenced just as the flight approached the location of the earlier TWA crash.

This thirteen-minute break, conjectured Scarry, was the result of an encounter with the same field of EMI that had brought down TWA 800. Although Swissair 111's computerized control system then carried out preprogrammed acts of self-repair, it was finally overwhelmed by problems that could no longer be contained. As in her earlier article, Scarry concluded with a plea for an NTSB investigation, a task, she wrote, that should be carried out by those in authority rather than being left to researchers like herself, "isolated citizens

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working through Freedom of Information inquiries."

Scarry's third article, "The Fall of EgyptAir 990" (October 5, 2000), took note of some obvious differences between this accident and the previous two. EgyptAir 990 left early in the morning, and on a Sunday, and it followed a more southerly route. Such differences aside, however, one key similarity stood out: the distinct possibility that EgyptAir 990 had passed near U.S. military vessels or ground stations that emit EMI.

It seems that, under the direction of air-traffic controllers, EgyptAir 990 had been asked to fly through a restricted zone that is held open for commercial aviation only when no military exercises are planned in it, as was the case that morning. But "the absence of scheduled military exercises," wrote Scarry, "does not guarantee that no military craft were in the corridors around the warning zones or inside the warning zones." Moreover, as became known from news reports, "powerful Air Force radar antennas were tracking EgyptAir 990," with "capacities not shared by any civilian radars."

These facts, Scarry once again concluded, were sufficient to warrant another NTSB investigation. Indeed, without such an investigation any suggestion that the crash was attributable to pilot suicide was "incomprehensible."

HOW PLAUSIBLE is any of this? Both Scarry's text and her extensive footnotes demonstrate that she is capable, if nothing else, of assembling a mass of information from recondite sources, ranging from the *Journal of Electronic Defense* to the *South China Morning Post*. They also reveal someone at home in the jargon of fields remote from the usual fare of the Harvard English department. But as for the heart of the matter—the EMI thesis itself—it is not only implausible, it is irresponsible in the extreme.

In the simplest terms, EMI is the effect that the energy or the radiation emitted by one electrical device has on the workings of another electrical device. It is, of course, a real and well-documented phenomenon, and one that can be readily observed when, for example, the operation of an electrical appliance causes static to appear on a nearby television screen.

Electromagnetic radiation runs a gamut, from sluggish, long-wave, low-energy radio waves that are quite innocuous to extremely short-wave, high-energy X-rays and gamma waves that can be lethal to living organisms if absorbed in sufficient doses. What kind of radiation, then, could cause an aircraft to drop from the sky, and by what mechanism would it do so? Though Scarry's analysis is exhaustive on a good many points, when it comes to these crucial issues, she offers not a single answer. Her omissions are significant.

As it happens, commercial pilots are required to file reports on all significant disruptions that occur in their flights. Yet, in the telling words of *Air Safety Week*, a leading industry newsletter, "there is not a single documented case of external electromagnetic interference among the 79,500 records dating back to 1988 filed in the Aviation Safety Reporting System. Not one."

This is hardly surprising. For among the factors that Scarry fails properly to consider in her various published articles are distance, impedance, and coupling. Thus, radiation of a given frequency and intensity may cause considerable damage at a range of 100 feet; at a range of miles, it may have no effect at all. For a plane cruising at, say, 20,000 feet (a little under four miles), any radiation striking its skin would be about ten-thousand to one-hundred-thousand times less intense than what it would be in the immediate vicinity of an emitter on the ground.

If, in addition to the distance factor, one takes into account the impedance of the atmosphere and the shielding effect of the fuselage, the radiation that could actually penetrate to the interior of an aircraft would be attenuated still more. Finally, even the quantity of radiation that did penetrate would have to be of the right frequency in order to "couple," i.e., resonate harmfully, with the electronic circuitry aboard the plane.

Let me put all this into perspective: the radiation routinely emitted *inside* an aircraft—from the microwave ovens in the pantry—is more powerful by many orders of magnitude than any radiation affecting it from external sources.

To be sure, the problems I have enumerated could theoretically be compensated for by emitter power. But superpowerful, monster emitters on military aircraft or Navy cruisers and submarines exist only in science fiction—and in the imagination of Elaine Scarry. The actual energy level of radiation from planes and ships, military or civilian, is severely constrained by the amount of power that can be generated on board. In fact, not even ground stations can produce the kind of radiation that Scarry has in mind. If they could, modern warfare as we know it would be altered profoundly. In particular, if all we had to do about incoming enemy missiles was to point at them the powerful tracking radars already in our possession, we would not now be spending billions on missile defense.

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If Scarry's grasp of physics is shaky,* she does not fare much better when it comes to the treatment of evidence or the logic of ordinary experience. For example: in pressing her case, Scarry relies heavily on suspicious-sounding anomalies and coincidences. Thus, as I have already noted, she points out that TWA 800 and Swissair 111

> could have originated from two different airports anywhere in the country, or, for that matter, anywhere in the world. But as it happens, both planes took off from a single airport, New York's JFK. The two flights could have taken off on any two days of the week and at any two minutes of the day. But as it happens, both took off on a Wednesday at 8:19 PM.

Scarry also makes much of the fact that all three accidents occurred amid a wider interval of relatively incident-free years, which suggests to her that they were not random occurrences: "No other large passenger plane taking off in the United States," she writes, "crashed during this three-years-and-three-months period."

It is well known, however, that if one looks closely at any half-way complicated event—the assassination of President Kennedy is a notorious case in point—all sorts of seemingly weird coincidences can be found. True randomness often appears to give rise to just such strange accumulations of "hits," a phenomenon that never ceases to amaze those unfamiliar with statistics. The myth that randomness implies uniformity is known as the gambler's fallacy; Scarry has fallen prey to it.

BUT THE most serious derelictions in Scarry's reasoning are to be seen in her analysis of the EgyptAir 990 crash. Both the TWA 800 and Swissair 111 accidents were, as she correctly notes, "unmistakably electrical" in origin (though she wrongly identifies the source of the problem). But Scarry also insists that the same might be said for EgyptAir 990. Not only were there those "powerful Air Force radar antennas" monitoring the doomed flight, but, she adds, it is "not hard to think of reasons why EgyptAir 990 might have become an ordinary—or even an extraordinary—target of intense observation."

For one thing, the plane was "a foreign carrier from a country that is not always regarded as a close United States ally." For another thing, on board were

> thirty-three Egyptian military officers, including one brigadier general. During their visit to the United States, the thirty-three officers were, according to the Defense Department spokesman, Kenneth Bacon, subdivided into distinct groups: the members of one group were here to study communications; a second group was testing recently purchased helicopters; the third group was here to receive "training on high frequency" equipment; the fourth group was learning about telecommunications; the fifth group was studying the repair of Chaparral missiles; the members of the sixth group were carrying out individual projects.

Unfortunately, Scarry never explains the relevance of this detailed enumeration of the Egyptian military personnel and their various assignments. But through her favorite literary devices of the hedged phrase ("persuasive but not unmistakable evidence") and the subjunctive form ("could have," "might have," and their permutations) she makes clear her opinion that U.S. electronic surveillance inadvertently knocked the plane from the sky while eavesdropping on in-flight conversations.

As for the real facts, as opposed to the remotely potential ones, Scarry's treatment of them is both revealing and scandalous. Thanks to the data recovered from the flight recording systems—the so-called black box—the NTSB was able to piece together a picture of EgyptAir 990's final minutes. The result so unambiguously conflicts with the EMI hypothesis that it is worth summarizing.†

Shortly before EgyptAir 990 began its dive into the ocean, the pilot, Ahmed El Habashy, excused himself to go to the bathroom, leaving the relief pilot, Gamil El Batouty, alone in the cockpit. At 01:48:40, Batouty is heard saying faintly in Arabic: "I rely on God." For another minute the plane continues flying normally, but then the autopilot is disconnected. Now manually flying the jumbo jet on his own, Batouty repeats the incantation, "I rely on God." At 01:49:53, the wing elevators—the adjustable surfaces that control the pitch of the aircraft—are shown dropping, and the plane begins to plunge nearly straight down. Eleven seconds later, Habashy re-enters the cockpit and exclaims "What's happening?"; Batouty continues to chant. At 01:50:21,

* Only after her three articles were published and subjected to critical scrutiny did Scarry begin to muster any sort of acquaintance with the basic physics involved. She did so, however, not in a published article but on the Internet, in a "web-based supplement" to the *New York Review of Books* dated October 26, 2000. Even this document, however, misunderstands EMI, erroneously holding that it can cause not only commonly observed static but also short circuits in electrical wiring of the kind that probably brought down TWA 800.

† The complete NTSB report is available at www.ntsb.gov/events/EA990/default.htm. My own brief summary is adapted from *Air Safety Week*, September 18, 2000.

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both engine levers are moved to the cut-off position, and the elevators split, with the left (controlled by Habashy) moving to raise the nose and the right (controlled by Batouty) remaining in the down position. Batouty continues his chants. At 01:50:24, both throttles are advanced, with no engine response. The captain then exclaims, "What is this? Did you shut down the engines?" Four subsequent pleas by the captain—"Pull with me"—go unanswered as the plane spirals downward into the water.

As NTSB investigators have suggested, this is about as unambiguous a picture of suicide as we are ever likely to see. Scarry, however, relegates the conversation in the cockpit to a footnote, and then proceeds to put a reverse spin on it, once again employing the subjunctive:

> "[I]t may have been that all subsequent command actions [after the craft began to dive] were initiated by the pilots, desperately trying to regain control of the plane and making the best decisions they could: those actions may have been a highly competent effort to save the aircraft or they may have been, however admirable, less competent. It is possible that all four of the key events—automatic pilot shutdown, steep dive, split-elevator anomaly, engine shutdown—were caused by electromagnetic interference or that only some of the four were caused by electromagnetic interference, the rest by pilot intervention and attempted rescue.

In Scarry's interpretation, the man who brought the plane down has thus been transformed into an "admirable" if ultimately unsuccessful savior of terrified passengers. At the same time, it is suggested that unnamed U.S. military personnel were once again recklessly flooding the skies with deadly emissions—emissions that, all told, have taken the lives of some 676 innocent people in three avoidable accidents.

IN THE *New York Times Magazine* profile, Elaine Scarry is described as a "wide-eyed woman with a girlish voice and unruly blond locks" who, despite the lack of "formal training in aviation science," wrote a "dazzling brief" in behalf of the thesis that electromagnetic radiation may have caused three devastating crashes. The *Times* of London has similarly praised "Scarry's meticulously researched conclusions," and has even speculated on the reason why the EMI thesis has been "downplayed" by investigators: "partly," according to the *Times*, "because it intrude[s] on the secrecies of national defense and partly because what science does not fully understand it prefers to disregard."

This is reprehensible. Far from disregarding EMI, the NTSB dutifully investigated Scarry's charges after her very first article appeared, consulting with both the military's Joint Spectrum Center and NASA and performing "worst-case" calculations based upon the strongest transmitters in the area. As James Hall, the acting chairman of the NTSB, has summarized the findings, "the maximum possible signal strength inside the fuselage of the TWA flight 800 from the highest power emitter known to exist in the area of the accident could not have provided sufficient energy to ignite the fuel/air mixture." Even more decisively, Hall notes, "EMI caused by an emitter capable of transmitting even *greater* energy than that transmitted by the known emitters could not ignite a fuel/air mixture in a fuel tank or cause the loss of control of an aircraft" (emphasis added).

But this did not deter Scarry or her editors from publishing a second and then a third article repeating her allegations. Today, she still denies that the NTSB has punctured her theory, and she continues to call upon it and other government agencies to perform what she calls "a comprehensive review of the external electromagnetic environment" surrounding each of the doomed flights.

We have been down this road before. Back in 1989, the *New Yorker* published a series of dramatic articles by Paul Brodeur purporting to demonstrate that people living near high-voltage electric-power lines were at a heightened risk of contracting cancer. After many lengthy investigations and counterinvestigations, it was proved (as Robert L. Parks reports in *Voodoo Science*) that no correlation existed between power lines and cancer; the electromagnetic fields emanating from the lines were well below the threshold to have any effect on human health. Nevertheless, the scare imposed its costs. Homeowners in some locations saw their property values collapse, utility companies were compelled to reroute their cables at great expense, and the estimated total bill for the fiasco ran in excess of $25 billion.

Are we in for another bout of radiation hysteria, this one focusing on the electronic-warfare capabilities of the U.S. military and complete with a Bermuda Triangle-like scenario of mysterious aircraft catastrophes? If history is indeed repeating itself, the first time was farce, and the second is farce again.

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Why Doctors Are Down

Ronald W. Dworkin

In a recent issue of a national anesthesiology journal, a physician wrote in to complain about the poor dress of his colleagues. Many, he said, now go to work in open-collared shirts and jeans, thus showing a lack of respect for the medical profession.

Arguments over attire are common these days in medicine. During my residency a few years ago, attending physicians would insist on keeping for themselves the exclusive right to wear long white coats, while requiring everyone beneath them to wear short ones. Their obsession with these fine distinctions recalled the fussing of the czar's civil servants over ribbons, braids, and epaulettes. The purpose was not so much to help solidify an actual chain of command at the hospital as to ensure that the stature achieved by those wearing the decoration was recognized by everyone.

There is something ridiculous and at the same time touching in the way doctors are now fighting over clothes. There is also something significant in it. In a world of managed care and government-directed medicine, many doctors cling to such trappings in an effort to preserve their self-esteem. Selecting a wardrobe may seem a paltry preoccupation, but it is one way to regain a feeling of autonomy and importance.

The peculiar mixture of self-doubt, fear, and resentment that now forms the consciousness of many American doctors cannot be explained by falling incomes alone. True, depending on the specialty, there *has* been a decline in income over the last decade, much of it traceable to the rise of managed care. But that change is slight as compared with the revolution in consciousness I have observed as a practicing physician. Although doctors complain about earning less money, about their ungrateful patients, about too many hours spent in the office, these concerns are in the end secondary. What really bothers them, whether or not they articulate it fully, is the dramatic loss of prestige undergone by the medical profession, a profession that once enjoyed tremendous power and influence in American society without even having to exert itself.

How did this happen? In seeking to explain it, many doctors themselves point to managed care. In hospital corridors, they cry that managed care has turned what was once a higher calling into just another business. But this simply begs the question. *Why* did managed care descend upon the medical profession with such great force, and succeed so brilliantly; and why now?

II

Although medical science itself is a rational discipline, doctors did not, traditionally, pursue the rational ends of business: namely, profit and self-interest. A generation ago, for example, there

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was nothing that actually prevented doctors from advertising their services in order to boost their incomes, but most refused to do so and were contemptuous of those who did. Their attitude was not unlike the attitude of career military men toward soldiers who fought only for profit. Such soldiers were no longer professionals; they were mercenaries.

The analogy is apt in more ways than one. The peculiar honor codes of the military profession—the asceticism, the harsh discipline, the willingness to tolerate physical abuse—find a parallel in a medical ethic that once encouraged doctors to work 48 hours straight, and to think it right and good to do so. Today, by contrast, just as the military attracts young men and women not by telling them how much they will suffer but by paying for their education and giving them skills they can later use to advance themselves in the market economy, so, too, older doctors murmur quietly that working 48-hour shifts is "crazy," while interns and residents demand a more "rational" schedule—the schedule of ordinary, business-minded professionals.

"Crazy" notions were, however, what once gave medicine and, to a lesser extent, law and academia their unique character. Nor did they seem in the least crazy to the people who believed in them. Rather, they were bound up in ideals of service that ultimately trace back to the guilds and professional associations of pre-capitalist Europe. In the modern, democratic period, such ideals came to attach themselves to the learned professions, which (however remunerative they sometimes proved to be) held themselves aloof from the values of profit and self-interest.

All this is now going by the boards. But the real culprit is not managed care, which merely took advantage of an opening. There has been, rather, a confluence of factors—of which one, surely, is the loss by the medical profession of its great patron, the one ally that used to protect doctors from the market economy and that helped sustain the peculiar ideals of their profession. I mean the state.

This may seem odd. After all, American doctors have notoriously feared the state. In particular, they have feared that government would socialize the health-care system and turn them into civil servants. But the reality has been otherwise. Through the regulatory apparatus that guaranteed doctors their autonomy and the right to organize themselves, and through support of the fee-for-service system (even in the government's own program of Medicare), the state long kept medicine safe from challenge by market forces, enabling the profession to survive intact with all of its archaic beliefs and quirky ways of doing things. It was only with the passage of legislation in the 1980's and 1990's giving corporations the freedom to organize the delivery of medicine that the state abandoned the medical profession to business.

In some ways, to be sure, this changeover was like the dropping of the other shoe. At the encouragement of the tax system, employers had long since begun to assume responsibility for the health insurance of their employees; but with this responsibility came no control over costs. When those costs increased dramatically in the mid-1980's, employers started demanding a more rational and efficient approach.

Gradually this demand was met. First, the state required that employers offer managed care within their menu of plans; being cheaper, this option soon became the one most employers offered exclusively. Then, the state itself established a managed-care version of Medicare for senior citizens. With this acquiescence by government in the demands of business, the ring closed around the medical profession. Ever since, doctors have been recast in the mold of their new masters, and willy-nilly have adopted their masters' worldview.

III

BUT THE loss of state support was only one element leading to the triumph of the managed-care model. Another and perhaps more consequential one was the completion within medicine itself of what may be called the scientific revolution.

For over a century, medicine had made a concerted effort to become a branch of hard science. Early on, the goal was to draw a distinction between it and other healing arts, like shamanism and witch-doctoring. But the major thrust soon became to validate medicine by resting it on the twin pillars of measurability and predictability. In time, expert medical practice became identified with precision, accuracy, and scientific knowledge—to the detriment of the comforting and interpersonal skills that were once the hallmark of successful doctoring.

In retrospect, we can discern four stages in this gradual process. In the first stage, starting in the early 20th century, the *emotional* troubles of patients were turned over to the care of psychiatrists and psychologists. As late as the 1920's, most mental illnesses like depression and neurosis were handled by internists and general practitioners using general medical techniques. Today, nonpsychiatrists still manage most cases of mental illness in the United States, but they do so by prescribing

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pills in accordance with predetermined diagnostic criteria. In the meantime, talk therapy and other forms of counseling, whose purpose is to delve into a patient's special problems with subtlety and nuance, have become the province of the psychiatric specialty and its companion discipline, psychology.

In the second stage, also starting in the early part of the 20th century, the *social* problems of patients were similarly farmed out. With advances in medical knowledge, doctors found they could no longer attend to aspects of care that were separate from illness but nevertheless critical, like the role of a patient's socioeconomic environment in determining the course of a disease. As a result, medical social work came into being, with the first department built at the Massachusetts General Hospital in 1905.

Unlike the division of labor between nonpsychiatrists and psychiatrists, the division of labor between doctors and social workers was probably a necessary development: physicians could simply no longer spend time chatting with a patient's neighbors. Nevertheless, the rise of social work caused yet another component of care to be removed from the purview of physicians. As a medical professor once put it, patients started to shoot past doctors like comets, crossing but for a moment their field of vision before fading into oblivion.

The third stage took place only within the last two decades, as the *ethical* dilemmas surrounding patient care became less and less the responsibility of individual doctors and their conscience. Today, many hospitals in the United States have multidisciplinary committees for resolving such problems as when to remove a brain-dead patient from a ventilator or how to dispense information about a patient's illness without violating doctor-patient confidentiality. The result, as Sally Satel and Christine Stolba have recently documented in COMMENTARY ("Who Needs Medical Ethics?," February 2001), is that moral issues are no longer inextricably intertwined with the medical profession.

In the fourth stage, also of recent vintage, the general *spiritual* duties of doctors have been relegated to self-help groups. Some doctors now encourage their patients to contact such groups—either in real space or on the Internet—when they want a shoulder to cry on or someone to talk to for more than just fifteen minutes.

Having lost the emotional dimension of the patient to psychology and psychiatry, the social dimension to social workers, the moral dimension to bioethicists, and the spiritual dimension to self-help groups, doctors have been reduced to mere engineers of the body. And that is where managed care comes in.

It was once hard to "manage" doctors according to traditional business methods for the same reason that it is hard to manage ministers and painters; so much depended on individual philosophy, personal attitudes, creativity, inspiration. Doctors who were responsible for the social, moral, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of patient care could not easily be governed by fixed rules or procedures. It would have been like telling a painter to paint with just one or two colors.

But engineers are easy to manage. Their tools are predictable. Their thinking is predictable. Their output is predictable. And so, when doctors gave up the intangible, unquantifiable aspects of personal doctoring and became engineers of the body, they paved the way for business to come in and manage them, too.

IV

A FINAL contributing factor to the triumph of managed care is the mass influx of women into the medical profession.

In 1970, 13 percent of medical students and 8 percent of practicing physicians in the United States were women. By 1999, those figures had risen to 50 percent and 22 percent respectively. By the year 2010, women may comprise a third of all physicians in the U.S. This is an enormous change, with far-reaching consequences. One of them has been the formation of an entirely new attitude toward medical practice.

As a physician working in a large community hospital, I often meet medical students who come to me for career advice. When I tell the females among them that anesthesiology offers major advantages, especially a flexible work schedule that will make it easier to have a family, some of them get very angry. They rattle off their degrees and accomplishments, emphasize their commitment to their career, and throw down the gauntlet to any man contending for the top jobs in the field. These young women, often between twenty-three and twenty-five years of age, carry within them an attitude imparted early in their careers: that their highest goal is to succeed professionally in a man's world.

But by the time these students graduate and, now over the age of thirty, come looking for jobs in anesthesiology, they tend to exhibit a dramatic change in consciousness. Very quickly during the interview they inquire about part-time and "flex-

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time" arrangements, something too insulting even to mention only a few years earlier. Between those two points in time, they seem to have stumbled upon a piece of wisdom they could not be told and to whose secrets experience alone is the key.

The desire of many women physicians to work in some kind of flexible arrangement has been well documented and much discussed. On average, women physicians in the United States work 85 percent as many hours as male physicians, but this number does not tell the whole story. For what often emerges is two different populations: those women who work full-time in order to satisfy their career or financial goals, and those who reduce their hours significantly to accommodate family life.

In my own experience, women physicians who are divorced or unmarried, or who have husbands with only average incomes, tend to go into practices that carry the greatest workload and have the fewest number of managed-care patients—and are therefore the most remunerative. By contrast, those with husbands who earn high salaries gravitate toward less grueling arrangements, often in managed-care practices. In one study, women physicians who were also married to physicians worked fewer hours and assumed a greater share of domestic responsibilities than women physicians married to nonphysicians: the husband's high salary made it easier for the wife to put her career on hold and raise the children.

Simply by exercising their natural urge to have and raise children, in other words, women physicians have introduced into the profession a new way of thinking about how medicine should be practiced. They have taught male doctors that an entire world beckons—family, personal obligations, leisure activities—and that medicine need not be all-consuming.

Those steeped in the traditions of the medical profession, usually males over fifty-five, often take a dim view of this new approach. They look upon women physicians as a disruptive element: disruptive, that is, to the professional ideal in which being a physician is and should be the defining element of one's existence, the element to which everything else in life must properly be sacrificed. Younger male doctors, by contrast, are much more comfortable with the new approach. Not only do they admire the women physicians who carve out time to pursue other interests, they envy them. Many would, if they could, cut back on their own hours in order to engage in other activities.

In any event, once these new attitudes toward medical practice were put into place, managed care became not only the most logical way to organize the profession but really the only way. The business approach—shifts, time sheets, night duty, and all the rest—is indispensable in an environment where the practice of medicine is just a job.

V

MEDICAL SCIENCE will always be with us, but the old ways of the medical profession are disappearing before our eyes, and they are likely to disappear completely within another generation. Young doctors, most of whom now go straight from training into managed care, tell me in conversation that their one guiding principle is simply to achieve the right balance in life: enough money, enough time off. As for the demands once put on physicians by a rigid professional ethic, they are no longer considered within the bounds of possibility.

One can think of a number of positive sides to this decline in medicine's professional ideal—including a revision of the old, contemptuous attitude among doctors toward labor for profit. America has a long tradition of judging all occupations to be equally honorable, but even I can recall as a college student how those of us who were going into medicine looked down on those who were going into business. We were more noble, while they were somehow degrading themselves. Among working doctors, this prejudice seems to be on the wane.

There may be other benefits as well. In the past, doctors worked around the clock and occasionally performed their duties half-asleep. This was not a serious problem when medicine was less advanced: it does not take much brain power to carry a specimen to the lab and prepare a slide—one of the duties of yesteryear. But now that medicine is extremely complex, requiring high levels of cognition at all times, well-rested physicians are a greater necessity.

But these gains are more than offset by the losses. In hospitals, the assembly-line approach to patient management, in which doctors go on and off shift, prevents continuity of care. Under managed care, for example, it is commonplace for an attending obstetrician to meet a mother-to-be for the first time five minutes before she begins to push. Outside the hospital, decisions of physicians are governed by statistically derived rules promulgated and enforced by HMO's. The consequences of all this have yet to be fully assessed, but they are unlikely to be benign.

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Nor are changes in the manpower burden in a hospital or in a physician's autonomy and discretion the end of the matter. The medical profession was once imbued with a special gravity, a solemnity that went beyond the seriousness that comes from dealing with life and death. Both my father and my grandfather were physicians, and I retain vivid memories of their approach to their calling. Even at home, my grandfather never ceased being a physician; whenever the phone rang or someone came to the door, my grandmother would say, "Yes, the doctor is here," or "No, the doctor will be back shortly," with the unquestioned expectation on all sides that he would make himself available as soon as he could and whenever he was needed. As for my father, I remember watching him conferring with other doctors—men of forty, looking like old men and dressing like old men, their faces etched by worry but also by *purpose*, following the rites demanded by the decorum of their profession whatever the inconvenience to themselves.

Now, when I look around at doctors my age, I see men and women of forty looking like boys and girls and dressing like boys and girls. They are dedicated to caring for their patients, and they take great pride in their competence. But they are also careful not to overstep the thin line that divides the world of doctoring from the rest of life. For them, the practice of medicine is technically more complicated than it was for previous generations of physicians, and their success rates are higher; but medicine is only one compartment, albeit often a very interesting one, of their lives.

Yet, even among younger doctors, many are plainly having difficulty making their peace with the way things are today. In the new division of labor, they supply the technology and manual skill, but they have been separated from life's great meanings. Doctors can operate and prescribe, but they cannot counsel, judge, lead, or support. At one level of consciousness, they feel muzzled, if not robbed as human beings.

The predicament doctors find themselves in is nicely illustrated by the otherwise puzzling encroachment into standard medical practice of one version or another of alternative medicine. The mere fact that so much of alternative medicine is not grounded in science means that in practicing it one is doing more than measuring, calibrating, categorizing, and fixing; one is becoming seriously involved in the mysterious workings of a single person's soul.

Of course, in order to justify the use of alternative medicine, or its inclusion as a legitimate topic of instruction in medical schools, it has become necessary to turn it, too, into a branch of hard science. Hence the feverish and largely futile search for evidence of its efficacy.* But that is another story—and, for most doctors who practice alternative medicine, beside the point. For them, it is precisely because alternative medicine cannot be encompassed by science that they value it.

THE CULTURE of the medical profession once enabled doctors to exercise a wide-ranging influence over their patients. That influence extended well beyond what was attributable to their medical powers alone, or to the treatment they had embarked upon in any given case, and into the realms of opinion and belief. There were, of course, potential dangers in the degree of personal authority they thus wielded, but for most patients there was also a profound reassurance and comfort to be had from it—just as, for doctors themselves, there was something inexpressibly fulfilling in work that required not only acumen, dexterity, and some intellect but also delicacy, worldly wisdom, and a slow, deep labor of the spirit.

Being a businessman, a part-time worker, or an engineer of the body holds its satisfactions, at least for some, but for those who expected more out of medicine it is causing restlessness, boredom, and a deep self-doubt. This is what it is coming to mean to be a doctor in a society that lacks the ideals of doctoring.

* See "The New Snake Oil," by Samuel McCracken, COMMENTARY, June 1999.

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Observations

A Jerusalem Diary

Yaacov Lozowick

October 4, 2000

Meir, our firstborn, is sixteen, an adolescent in every sense of the term: outlandish dress, behavior to go with it. Still, he did spend half his summer vacation earning money, and for the last two weeks he has been campaigning to buy himself a cell phone with his earnings. For it must be said: 98.4 percent of all Israelis between the ages of three and a hundred-and-three own their own cell phone. Until yesterday, when Meir got his, the Lozowick family had been among the remaining 1.6 percent.

This morning he took it with him to school, which, I somehow had forgotten, borders on Arab Jerusalem. Literally borders: some day, this will mark the international boundary, and the building adjacent to his school will be in Palestine.

An hour after traipsing off with his new toy, Meir began bombarding his mother with reports.

"*Imma* [Mom], the neighbors are being more aggressive today."

"*Imma*, they're throwing firebombs, and we're not allowed out of the building."

"*Imma*, they're shooting with live ammunition, from both sides."

"*Imma*, the police have closed the main road, I don't see how I'm going to get home."

At this stage his mother called me. Meir was panicking: should she drive over and fetch him? I told her to stay put and called him myself. As we talked I could hear staccato gunshots in the background, but Meir, who was in the gym, assured me it was just the rap of basketballs on the court. We agreed on the route he would take if there was still fighting going on at the end of the day. I called his mother to urge her not to worry.

Late in the afternoon, on my way home, I again heard gunshots, real ones, but they lasted only a minute or two. This evening an elderly man walking his dog in the neighborhood of Gilo was shot at from the nearby Arab town of Beit Jalla, which is controlled by the Palestinian Authority (PA). He fell on his face; the windows of the apartments behind him were all smashed.

October 31, 2000

It has taken a while for the significance of events to penetrate my mind.

In mid-summer, Ehud Barak flew to Camp David for secluded talks with Yasir Arafat and Bill Clinton. The last time a trio of American, Arab, and Israeli leaders cloistered themselves at Camp David was in 1978; the result was a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt that has withstood some pretty severe tests.

Those were heady days. Upon his return, Prime Minister Menachem Begin was greeted at the airport by thousands of cheering demonstrators. A representative of the Peace Now movement, only recently established, announced on television: "We didn't vote for Begin, but since he has risen to the historic moment, we'll marshal all our forces to support him."

The image is set in black and white—color TV came to Israel only a few years later—but the physical sensation was unforgettable. Like other members of the "peace camp," like Israelis in general, I was overcome with emotion at the prospect of life in a country not at war—"a normal country," as we liked to say.

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Our tears of joy turned out to be premature—but now, a generation later, Barak seemed poised to repeat Begin's feat, and on the night of his departure thousands of us converged in front of his residence to demonstrate our support. The first speaker, Tzali Reshef, prominent in Peace Now from the beginning, reminded the crowd of the long road they had traveled. Often, he recalled, the movement had operated in a climate of public hostility. But now, after all these years, a prime minister elected with a mandate to withdraw from the occupied territories was off to reach an agreement with Yasir Arafat. "This is the moment," he thundered.

But it wasn't. A few weeks later Barak was home again, and there were no crowds at the airport. Israel has been dismantling its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza since the Oslo accords of 1993; at Camp David, Barak had effectively offered a complete withdrawal, recognition of an independent Palestinian state, and even compromises over Jerusalem, all in return for a Palestinian declaration that the conflict was over. Arafat turned him down.

On September 27, an Israeli soldier, nineteen-year-old David Biri of Jerusalem, was killed by a bomb at Netzarim, an island of Israeli-controlled territory in the Gaza Strip. Netzarim, along with the other Israeli settlements still in Gaza, was to be evacuated and turned over to the Palestinians according to the terms offered by Barak at Camp David. Should we have pricked up our ears at the death of David Biri, recognized the beginning of something new? At the time, it did not seem particularly unusual.

The next day, Ariel Sharon went to the Temple Mount on a visit that had been cleared in advance with the Palestinian authorities. Jibril Rajoub, one of the PA's top security officials, had assured his Israeli counterparts that as long as Sharon stayed away from the Muslim mosques on the Mount, there would be no problem. The visit was uneventful. On Friday, the following day, Arab rioters on the Temple Mount dumped rocks on Jews praying at the Western Wall below.

A PICTURE on my desk as I write shows a four-year-old girl, crying with terror as her mother pulls her away from the Wall; in the background, other women race off as a policeman screams at them to get away. Up on the Mount itself, five of the rioters would be killed in the ensuing clash with the Israeli police. The same day, an Israeli policeman was also killed; he was on a joint patrol near the town of Qalkilya when one of his Palestinian colleagues simply walked over and shot him.

For the next two days, I heard no news. It was Rosh HaShanah, and we spent long hours in the synagogue. To me the climactic moment of the service has long been the passage in the prayer book that was composed by Amnon of Magenza at the end of the 11th century. Magenza was the Jewish name for the German town of Mainz, and I could picture Rabbi Amnon sitting in the dust and rubble of his destroyed community, pouring out his heart.

Limbering up for the task of liberating the holy land, Crusaders en route to Jerusalem had been massacring Jews along their path through Europe, a tidal wave of thugs moving south. In their wake, a devastated Amnon sat and wrote about the awesome dread of the one day each year when God decides who among us will live, and who will die. Fittingly, the possibility of another's year life is noted only briefly in Amnon's prayer, while the modes of death he lists are multiple: "who by water, who by fire, who by the sword, who by the beast, who by hunger, who by thirst. . . . Man is as a broken shard, as straw on the wind, as a wilted flower, as a passing shadow, as a fleeting dream."

As a child, and later as a young adult, these words went right by me. The older I become, the more deeply they resonate: another year has passed, and I have been blessed with life, and Rabbi Amnon is back to remind me not to take any of it for granted. And he sends me another, subliminal message, too, in the mere fact that the words he penned in the midst of calamity nine centuries ago should still have the power to stir the soul to reflection and, improbably, hope. A tradition that calls forth such poetry from the dust is surely worth living for.

On Sunday night, prayer and meditation behind me, I got on the Internet and visited the *New York Times*. There, the horrifying picture of twelve-year-old Muhammad al-Durrah, huddling next to his father in terror moments before being killed in crossfire, struck me like a fist in the face: me, a lover of peace, me, the father of a twelve-year-old son.

Muhammad's picture, too, is on my desk as I write. I have spent many hours studying it, etching it into my soul; it is incredibly powerful, and I have no wish to hide from it. But weeks would pass before I began to understand the truth of it. That the incident happened at Netzarim, the same lonely outpost in Gaza where David Biri had been shot and killed. That Muhammad's father had been screaming to his *compatriots* for a brief cessation in their firing at Israeli sentries. That a French cameraman had been situated only a few yards away, but rather than joining his own pleas to the pleas of the anguished father had kept his camera trained on the picture of his career. That the Palestinian "freedom fighters" all around were so intent on redeeming by bloodshed what they had refused to accept by negotiation that it never crossed their minds to stop shooting. That, given the terrain and the range, it was highly improbable that the Israeli soldiers, hunkered down, shot at from three sides, could have had any idea that there was a child there. Only a fool—or worse—would claim that they calmly surveyed their surroundings

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and maliciously shot down a child.

But that is precisely what my friend Arthur claimed. He is an English gentleman, a non-Jew who teaches in a university and who each year takes his students to visit the sites of the Nazi death camps in Poland. His reading of the big picture, or so he told me, was that Ariel Sharon was a war criminal—a Milosevic—and in a normal country he would be tried for his crimes. To my demurral—what was happening was too serious to be glibly blamed on Sharon, and if one were looking for a leader with the blood of innocents on his hands, Arafat would easily qualify—his response was to sever relations with me. A decade of friendship, gone in the puff of an e-mail. Maybe we had never been as friendly as I thought.

Or maybe I was just expecting too much of him. People, after all, are creatures of their times, and of their societies, and the British media have been quite clear as to who is to blame for what is going on. The *Economist*, one of the most influential news magazines in the world, has summed up the events thus:

> [Israel] has to abate its greed for other people's land. . . . Most Palestinians, who once lived in the land that is now Israel, have through their leaders accepted the two-state solution. It is now up to the Israelis, if they want a decent, civilized life for themselves, to allow the Palestinians a reasonably-sized little state with its proper capital in East Jerusalem.

Isn't this precisely what Barak just offered?

December 5, 2000

At the beginning of November I had occasion to go to Germany on business. At a mostly deserted Ben Gurion airport I chatted with one of the building staff. Not only was tourism dead, which everybody knew, but Israelis themselves had stopped traveling. "No one feels like taking a vacation with this mess at home," he said. I, too, had had my qualms.

In Germany, our little war seemed far away; over the course of ten days of meetings the only people who inquired about it were friends I met after work. On my return home, the first thing I heard on the news was that Gilo was being shot at. I was thunderstruck: six weeks of firing at a residential neighborhood, and we hadn't found a way to put a stop to it?

I ran into an acquaintance, a mid-echelon officer in the military.

"So how are things?"

"Average."

"Average?"

"Yup. Worse than before, better than what's to come."

The large-scale violence was indeed dying down, having reached a precipice of sorts in, of all places, the Galilee, where in late October Israeli Arabs—citizens, every one of them—had joined the rioting. For about ten days, twenty-fours a day, the news reports listed roads that had to be closed to traffic; they included the country's main arteries. Two weeks later, a friend drove down to Jerusalem from his home up north and told of mile after mile of devastated highway: steel lampposts razed, traffic lights smashed, a gas station torched, stone barricades everywhere. Thirteen rioters had been killed by the police. In an ensuing counter-explosion by Jews in the northern part of the country, the only casualty was himself a Jew, hit by a rock while driving on the main road from Haifa to Tel Aviv.

As the violence inside Israel subsided, Palestinian arms turned instead on the settlers in the occupied territories. No one gets as bad a press as these settlers: men, women, and children who are regularly portrayed as the evil, brutal edge of Israeli society, their avarice for Palestinian land having provided the spark that lit the entire conflict. My own relationship with them has long been ambivalent: objecting to their goals, I have liked many of them personally. Almost all the people I went to school with grew up to join the settlers' movement.

In mid-October I had had lunch with three or four of them. They were complimenting themselves on their prescience. They had known all along that the Palestinians were not going to make peace, and by standing their ground they had managed to provoke the Arabs into showing their hand. "Stop kidding yourselves," I responded. "This has nothing to do with you. If the Palestinians had been willing to make peace with me and my kind, you couldn't have stopped us. The truth is that the peace effort blew up over Jerusalem, not the settlements."

By November, though, the settlers were being shot down on the roads. Colleagues who live in Efrat or Ofra took to leaving work early in order to get home before nightfall; a member of my staff missed work altogether one day to attend the funeral of a neighbor, murdered in his car the evening before.

Practically every household in these settlements keeps one or more firearms, and many of the men are also armed with automatic weapons lent on a permanent basis by their reserve units; they also have military training and experience that far exceeds anything the Palestinians can offer. And yet, contrary to their image abroad, the settlers were restraining themselves. It made one pause and think, or should have.

One of the murdered was Dr. Shmuel Gillis, a forty-two-year-old hematologist at Hadassah hospital and the father of five. At the funeral service his colleagues told of Gillis's outstanding professionalism and his contributions to an international research effort, while his patients lauded his warm bedside manner. Mourning openly along with the rest, his Palestinian patients shared their grief with the media. The cortege set out from Hadassah accompanied by thousands; additional thousands, standing in si-

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lence, lined the road south of Jerusalem on which Gillis had been shot. It was all rather different from the Palestinian funerals to which we have become accustomed, hate-filled affairs that often serve as launching points for more violence.

February 15, 2001

By now, terror murders or attempted murders in Jerusalem, Hadera, Holon, Netanya, and elsewhere have blurred the distinction between the settlers and the general Israeli populace. It is not the occupied territories that agitate Palestinian passions, it seems; it is the very existence of the state of Israel. Ehud Barak's desperate attempts to reach an agreement in the last hours before his downfall served to bring that into starker relief.

Barak had not been backed by a majority of the Knesset when he went to Camp David, but neither had he been toppled on his return. The process of toppling began in January, when new elections were set for early this month and all the polls concurred that Barak was going to be severely thrashed. The only thing that would save him, or so he appeared to think, was a peace treaty that would radically change the picture on the ground.

Bill Clinton, even then packing his own bags, proposed to bridge the gap between the two sides by having Israel give in to the division of Jerusalem and the Palestinians renounce the "right of return." This was the agenda for talks at Taba on the Red Sea. Whether Barak had a mandate to agree to such a deal was moot but also irrelevant; in the event, the Palestinians flatly rejected it.

The attitudes of the two sides were clearly on display at a live press conference at Taba on the final evening of the talks. Shlomo Ben-Ami, our foreign minister, spoke Hebrew; Abu Alah, his Palestinian opposite number, spoke Arabic, with simultaneous translation into Hebrew. Each addressed his own constituency (though Abu Alah faced no elections), so we could compare.

Ben Ami was full of sweetness. Mutual trust has been re-established, he proclaimed, presumably in my name and that of my fellow citizens. We are almost there. Vote for Barak next week, he all but added, and peace will come shortly thereafter. Abu Alah was rather less sanguine. Yes, progress had been made toward putting an end to Israeli aggression. But the Israelis, he told his people, were not yet ready to accept our inalienable right of return. Until they do, we Palestinians have assorted methods at our disposal: diplomatic, political, and otherwise. Vote for Sharon next week, Abu Alah more or less told *us*, since peace is not going to happen, and Sharon is the candidate who knows it.

Last week, when the election was held, Abu Alah's argument won the day.

March 27, 2001

Some Israelis with long memories have the feeling they are back in the 1940's, in the dangerous years leading up to the establishment of the Jewish state. Whether or not things are as bad as that, undoubtedly there are similarities. It is unsafe today, as it is was unsafe then, to travel the roads. It is unsafe to run errands downtown. An experiment in resolving our conflict with the Arabs, an experiment that many of us thought we had to undertake and were strong enough to undertake, has failed dismally, as others of us said it would. The price of the failure is being paid in blood.

Yesterday, ten-month-old Shalhevet Pas of Hebron was murdered by a sniper. In the evening a bomb was defused in the center of Petach Tikva. Today there have been two bombs in Jerusalem, one of them on the bus that my two sons and I take every day. The terrorist, who was killed, will now be added to the roster of Palestinians murdered by the Israeli aggressor. Indeed, just as the bomb was going off, Yasir Arafat was giving a speech at the Arab summit in Amman saying that Israel's occupation of Palestinian land was the greatest act of terrorism imaginable, the foreign minister of Denmark was identifying the Israeli occupation as the cause of the conflict, and the head of Amnesty International was unconditionally backing a Palestinian right of return.

I have been told that our situation would have stumped Kafka, but that seems unfair. On the contrary, I think one of his sentences was tailored specifically for us: *die Luege wird zur Weltordnung gemacht*, the Lie rules the world.

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ART

Fun with Paint

Steven C. Munson

THE EXHIBITION *Wayne Thiebaud: A Paintings Retrospective*, which will open in New York at the Whitney Museum of American Art on June 28 and run through September 23, is significant for several reasons.* First, it provides a fairly comprehensive overview of this eighty-year-old artist's work over the past half-century. Second, it raises the question of what is pop art, while at the same time suggesting some possible answers. And third, it sheds some light on what is commonly referred to as the conflict between realism and abstraction in painting.

The exhibit is divided into three groups of paintings, arranged chronologically.

The first group is the one that made Thiebaud an art-world star. It consists mostly of images of cheap consumer goods and food—a rack of ties, a pair of shoes, rows of bowls of soup, and, most famously, groups of cakes and pies and deli items—and pictures of people, individually or in groups. These paintings are called "still lifes" and "portraits," but one immediately feels there is something unsatisfactory about the use of these terms, as if they had been applied because no others were available.

The second and third sections of the show are devoted to paintings of San Francisco street scenes and of the broad, open agricultural spaces of northern California. These are in a different style from the earlier pictures, but all three groups are said to evidence the artist's consistent interest in both realism and the formal issues raised by abstraction, as well as in the expressive properties of paint. These interests, we are told, converge most apparently in Thiebaud's cake pictures, in his use of paint in a thick application that simulates the appearance of frosting.

Thiebaud himself has called this technique "object transference," which sounds pretty serious until one looks at the pictures and realizes that he uses the same technique to paint other things, too, whose real textures have nothing in common with icing. This by itself would seem to raise a pretty fundamental question about the nature of his realism, which is supposedly concerned with getting at the essential "thingness" of things. But it is not a question that troubles Steven Nash, the curator of the show, who seems to feel that Thiebaud's preoccupations are fairly straightforward. As he writes in the lead catalogue essay, Thiebaud

> has worked prolifically in a variety of media to define a figurative idiom whose individualism lies very much in his ability to balance apparent opposites: representation and abstraction, seriousness and wit, immediacy of touch and rigorous compositional control. . . . In many ways he is the prototypically American artist, but with old-master international savvy.

Nash adds to this tribute a balancing act of his own, asserting that, although the connections often drawn between Thiebaud's work and pop art "are overstated, it does share with that movement a fasci-

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* The exhibit originated in San Francisco and has already been on view at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., where I saw it.

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nation with brash Americana," while at the same time paying homage to "such diverse figures as Hopper and Mondrian, Chardin and Sargent, Morandi and Diebenkorn."

This is rather amazing company to find Thiebaud placed in, especially since until recently he seems to have been regarded as a relatively unimportant artist who just happened to become famous as a result of the pop-art explosion of the early 1960's. But the art critic Adam Gopnik, who contributed the only other essay to the show's catalogue, is no less effusive than Nash. Calling Thiebaud, grandly, "an American painter," he writes that "few American empirical painters have a wider range" and that the common feeling in all of Thiebaud's work is "democratic abundance seen in aristocratic isolation."*

Interestingly enough, both of these commentators, although seemingly certain of Thiebaud's importance, have a hard time explaining very clearly what it is about his art that qualifies it for such high esteem. Indeed, Gopnik seems unsure whether Thiebaud can unequivocally be called a "major" painter. He writes that "Thiebaud is without a school, an obviously radical innovative style, a 'breakthrough.'" Still, he adds,

> if these things seem to limit the way we write about his pictures, perhaps the trouble lies not with the pictures but with the way we write about them. . . . The trick may be not that the pictures are more complicated than they look, but that the act of looking may be more complicated than it feels.

For his part, Nash concedes that "it is difficult to identify . . . [Thiebaud's] place in the wide spectrum of contemporary realism." He further admits that, although "we can enjoy the fruitful intersection of observation, memory, and painterly manipulation that his art represents," we "may not be able to describe fully the artistic alchemy involved."

NOTWITHSTANDING THEIR uncertainty about what constitutes the essence of Thiebaud's achievement, both Nash and Gopnik agree that the fundamentals of his art are rooted in his formative experiences as a cartoonist and commercial artist.

Those experiences began in high school, when Thiebaud, who was born in Arizona in 1920 and was raised in southern California, first developed an interest in drawing. He briefly worked as an apprentice in the animation department of Walt Disney studios and attended trade school to study commercial art. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army Special Services near Sacramento, where he created a cartoon strip for the base newspaper, worked on murals, and designed posters and set-ups for publicity photographs.

After the war, Thiebaud landed a job in New York in the art department of Fairchild publications, which published *Men's Wear* and *Women's Wear Daily*. From 1946 to 1949 he worked in Los Angeles for the Rexall Drug company as a layout designer and cartoonist. At that time, he also began to paint seriously and was soon exhibiting his work.

In 1951, he had his first one-man show, and over the next decade he earned a master's degree in art, acquired a series of teaching positions, pursued his interest in filmmaking and stage design, and received several commissions for public works, all the while continuing to exhibit on a regular basis. He also returned to New York, where he spent time with, among others, the abstract expressionist painters Willem de Kooning, Franz Kline, and Barnett Newman. Back in California, he was exposed to the emerging Bay Area figurative movement, led by David Park, Elmer Bischoff, and Richard Diebenkorn. All of this activity set the stage for his breakthrough exhibition, in 1962, at the Allan Stone gallery in New York.

When Allan Stone first saw Thiebaud's deli and cake pictures, he reportedly said that he did not know what to make of them—though he evidently did perceive their commercial potential at a moment when pop art and its animating ideas were in the air. Upon seeing this exhibit, I felt the same way myself. This is a common reaction when one confronts unresolved or questionable art into which has been put a great deal of sincere effort.

The first thing one notices about the paintings for which Thiebaud is most celebrated—those of cakes, pies, hot dogs, sundaes, gumball machines, and other items of mass consumption—is that most of them are entirely without affect. The objects, thickly and colorfully painted, seem to sit on their thickly painted, most often white backgrounds stupidly; one begins to feel that one is simply stupidly staring back. The robot-like "portraits," such as *Girl with Ice Cream Cone* (1963) and *Five Seated Figures* (1965), likewise partake of this dead or artificial quality, and, in terms of execution, exude all the glaring crudeness we associate with the cheaper styles of commercial art.

Not every painting in the show is as affectless as these. There are definite expressionist tendencies lurking in such pictures as *Twin Jackpots* (1962), which suggests a pair of ancient idols; in the ape-like pose of the woman in *Bikini* (1964); in the coffin-like form of the bathtub in *Woman in a Tub* (1965); in the lonely *Yellow Dress* (1974); and, most strongly, in the truly ominous *Dark Candy Apples* (1983)—perhaps, all told, the most interesting work in the show, given the unexplored possibilities it promises. But for the most part, Thiebaud's paint-

* There has not been so much flag-waving over a major museum exhibit since last year's rediscovery of Norman Rockwell. Perhaps patriotism has now become the last refuge of art critics. See my article, "Selling Norman Rockwell," in the September 2000 COMMENTARY.

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ings are devoid of emotional content.

Both Nash and Gopnik consider this to be a significant part of Thiebaud's accomplishment. At the same time, however, they would have us believe that, as the result of some mysterious and inexplicable process, these works, in Nash's phrase, "allow instinct and emotion to thrive." In Thiebaud's case, according to Gopnik, this unlikely transformation of "the dumb thing" is effected through the artist's "skill at depicting the way things look."

But although they are representational, Thiebaud's paintings are not realist in this sense at all.* Gopnik gets it exactly wrong when he says that "his art has none of the actual qualities of advertising imagery." In fact, what Thiebaud's painted objects look like or, rather, what they simulate in a highly prettified manner, is precisely the kind of images that used to be found in inexpensive print advertising.

It was, indeed, just this imitation of an immediately recognizable style of commercial illustration that made Thiebaud an overnight sensation. As Nash writes, the 1962 exhibition at Allan Stone "sold out, with numerous museums and prominent collectors acquiring works and accolades rapidly appearing in several national publications. The degree of the response . . . was due in part to the automatic associations made by many with the burgeoning pop movement." Nash and Gopnik both assert that this was a case of mistaken identity—but to do so they have to ignore how his work was viewed, unambiguously, at the time it was being produced.

There were *reasons* why the "automatic associations" with pop art were made, and those reasons were enumerated in a supportive 1966 essay by Nancy Marmer on "California Pop":

> He deals in characterless repetition (a row of identical pastries, a shelf of lipstick tubes, a wall of pinball machines) and hygienically vacant settings. His subjects, though isolated, are solidly three-dimensional and cast shadows. His fusion of the California school's luscious and brilliant-hued paint with a drawing technique based on the conventional simplifications of illustration has produced, in his pastries and other foodstuffs, an accessible, bright, and synaesthetic style. . . . [H]is more recent figures . . . share with the common objects the anonymous tone of mass production. In human form, this anonymity becomes bovine, thoughtless inanity.

What Marmer said about Thiebaud in 1966 was entirely consistent with what was being written, with admiration, about the main figures of the pop movement. Thiebaud's signature work, in short, bears fundamental similarities to theirs, both in terms of its origin in the world of commercial art and in terms of its "impersonal" intention and execution.

WHY NASH and Gopnik are now at pains to distance Thiebaud from the movement that made his reputation may be the most interesting question raised by this exhibit. They rest their reclassification of him as a realist primarily on the fact that the paintings that followed the famous "still-lifes" and "portraits," the cityscapes and landscapes, were executed in a decidedly non-pop style.

But these paintings are far less accomplished, in terms of their ambition, than Thiebaud's cake-work. Much is made by Nash of the influence on Thiebaud of the mid-career urban landscapes of the late Richard Diebenkorn, who truly was one of the major American painters of the last half of the 20th century. Diebenkorn went from an early abstract-expressionist period through a representational phase and then returned to abstraction with his famous Ocean Park series. A visit to the Hermitage, where he encountered the works of Matisse, played a decisive role in the latter phases of his career; it is difficult to think of anyone else who has so successfully assimilated the influence of the French master and turned it into a basis for his own masterly achievement.

Diebenkorn was, in fact, able to absorb and transform such influences from the outset of his career; he knew how to take from another painter the essence of what was there and then make of it something with a power entirely its own. He also knew what to take from himself. The beauty of his representational art results from a fusing of abstract-expressionist means to a style of geometrical composition that minimizes realistic detail in favor of a logic dictated by color and line, each of which loses its independence to the other. In such paintings, Diebenkorn really does achieve a "balance," or rather a natural unity, of "abstraction and representation."

As it happens, the Phillips Collection owns an exceptional group of Diebenkorns, some of which were on display on the first floor of the Thiebaud show. Whether accidental or not, the juxtaposition was unfortunate, for it only underscored how Thiebaud seems to have misapprehended, or misapplied, Diebenkorn's aesthetic.

In his cityscapes, Thiebaud has clearly tried to imitate some of Diebenkorn's compositional devices, but he shallowly subsumes them to the dictates of a familiar, if unclear, illustrational purpose. The views of San Francisco vistas distort the topography of the city's streets and buildings in fantastic ways, mainly having to do with making things extremely vertical. Devoid of people, these scenes are nevertheless populated with seemingly countless arcana—tiny trees, buses, street signs, etc.—creating once again a highly artificial impression of reality. The

* The most realistic picture in the exhibit was not a painting but the gouache-and-pastel *Candy Ball Machine* (1977), which shows a feeling for the subject and a delicacy of drawing absent from the major works.

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daylight scenes are placid and anonymous, the night scenes anonymous and threatening. Where have we seen imagery like this before?

Nash calls them "cities of the mind." The real source of their inspiration seems to lie somewhere in the realm of the science fiction they so strongly echo, the appeal of which likewise depends on the creation of a highly "realistic" but artificial world. They seem to illustrate unspecified fantasies of domination and power, transposed onto canvas by means of an unconvincing use of the language of modern painting.

The landscapes have the same unreal quality; one expects them to be romantic, but they are not, although a few vaguely evoke the nostalgic geometries of precisionism. Large, brightly colored, and highly patterned, they are in their overall lightness more reminiscent of the southern California landscapes of David Hockney, minus Hockney's whimsicality and intensity of color, than of Diebenkorn's. As with the cityscapes, there are moments where color re-creates a sensation of natural light (in this respect, however, the most successful picture is *Orange Grove*, which was painted in 1963), but these moments do not complete the whole. For the most part these paintings seem like a kind of landscape illustration in which the abstract and representational impulses remain gently, one could even say blithely, at odds.

Perhaps this is the key to Thiebaud's oeuvre—that he does not really care how well the pictures work as paintings. As he has recalled, "When I painted the first row of pies, I can remember sitting and laughing—sort of a silly relief—'Now I have flipped out!' The one thing that allowed me to do that was having been a cartoonist."

This is a wonderfully liberating attitude to be able to take toward your work. Thiebaud may have abandoned the pop style that brought him his great success, but he does not seem to have abandoned the spirit of it, which was part of the spirit of the movement itself. That spirit was indicated, in another context, by one of pop's premier practitioners, Claes Oldenburg:

> Painting, which has slept so long in its gold crypts, in its glass graves, is asked out to go for a swim, is given a cigarette, a bottle of beer, its hair rumpled, is given a shove and tripped, is taught to laugh, is given clothes of all kinds, goes for a ride on a bike, finds a girl in a cab and feels her up.

It may be hard to imagine Thiebaud putting it that way, but there is what you might call a shared sense of carelessness toward the demands of the picture plane that unites him with the other pop artists, a sense of carelessness evidently impelled by the desire to have fun.

In Thiebaud's case, having fun seems to have meant assimilating all of the major influences on him—Edward Hopper, de Kooning, Diebenkorn, and others—to his own love of the illustrator's life. (When he first came upon Hopper's work, he thought of it, writes Gopnik, "as a kind of illustration," and he also feels that "de Kooning had something to do with commercial art.") Perhaps his work is best understood, then, as it is experienced: as neither abstract nor realist, nor a compelling synthesis of the two, but rather as an idealization of commercial art forms, subjects, and techniques that happens to use painting for its own ends. This would account for both the comic-book-like quality of Thiebaud's imagery—what even his admirers call its cartoonishness or goofiness—and for the fact that, no matter how many times Nash and Gopnik reach for a comparison to Mondrian or Morandi, they always fall back on the "formal similarities" between Thiebaud's art and things like Hollywood publicity photographs and drugstore ads—the subject-images on which he cut his artistic teeth.

Strikingly, their confusion mirrors the confusion that accompanied the emergence of pop in the first place. The movement was "launched" by a 1962 show in New York that was called the "New Realists." Yet Lucy Lippard, one of pop art's leading promoters, asserted in 1966 that "Pop is a hybrid, the product of two abstraction-dominated decades, and, as such, is the heir to an abstract rather than a figurative tradition. Pop art has more in common with the American 'post-painterly abstractions' of [the color-field artists] Ellsworth Kelly or Kenneth Noland than with contemporary realism."

So even then, it seems, when the movement was in the full flower of its success, there was uncertainty about where the pop artists belonged. Some of them insisted, implausibly, that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, their true interests and preoccupations were formal—the same claim advanced, along with its opposite, on behalf of Thiebaud. But at the same time they were operating on the premise that, because popular culture was part of everybody's life, making it a subject worthy of serious artistic attention would bring fine art closer to the "real world" and to the people in it. Even more to the point, they claimed that the art they were making was more "real" than that of the modern, especially abstract, tradition against which they were in self-conscious rebellion.

The question of what is "real" about a painting (as distinct from realistic) is a difficult one, but this premise and this claim were simply wrong. Lippard noted the obvious when she wrote that pop artists "operate at one remove from actuality," since life "as represented in the comic strips or advertisements bears little resemblance to real life." More importantly, what is "real" about a painting usually has less to do with what it "references" than most people think. Consider this passage from a (favorable) 1960 review by Fairfield Porter of a painter named Isabel Bishop:

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> Her paradox consists in saying that the part of art which represents the outer world, and which criticism associates with reality, is a sublimation; and that the abstract part that represents nothing, and that criticism associates with non-objectivity, is the part that stands for reality, for the object, for being awake.

The paintings that were most "awake" in the Thiebaud exhibit were two early abstract-expressionist-influenced works—*Cigar Counter* (1955) and *Ribbon Store* (1957). They have a genuinely primitive, Dubuffet-like charm and surfaces that transform their subjects into strokes of living color. They are "alive to painting," to quote a favorite Thiebaud phrase, in a way that his bigger, later pictures are not, and they were among the handful of works in the show that gave one real pleasure to look at. They also received scant attention in the catalogue and reviews, perhaps because they did not really fit with everything that came after.

But they left me wondering what Thiebaud might have done if he had continued in that direction, if he had not chosen to suppress his expressionist impulse, if he had decided, perhaps, not to have fun. As for the direction he ultimately did follow, its results are now spread before us. And what seems most real about them is the illusion they present us with about themselves, the illusion that they are truly significant contributions to art.

The same illusion defines how we first experienced pop art as a whole, and how we have continued to experience it, with all that this has entailed in regard to our sense of the life of art.

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Music

What Killed Classical Recording?

Terry Teachout

In 1996, I surveyed the state of the classical-recording industry for Commentary.[1] Then, as now, there were six major labels controlled by four corporate entities: BMG (formerly RCA), EMI, Sony (formerly Columbia), and Polygram, a European-based conglomerate that owned Decca/London, Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft (DGG), and Philips.

At the time, I reported, all six labels were experiencing "a severe crisis of artistic confidence," arising from their continuing inability to sign new artists capable of recording performances that would sell in large quantities. Most had responded by starting to release "crossover albums and pop-style concoctions." Having examined the variously deteriorating positions of these labels, I came to the conclusion that they would "continue to search in vain for the certainty of artistic direction that record buyers [once] took for granted."

Today, BMG has all but stopped making new classical recordings. Sony is now devoting most of its attention to crossover projects like the cellist Yo-Yo Ma's collaborations with the bluegrass fiddler Mark O'Connor. Decca/London and Philips have cut back sharply on the number of important new CD's they release each year, while EMI is increasingly concentrating on inexpensively made discs by young European performers who are as yet unknown in this country and appear likely to remain so. Only DGG regularly releases new CD's by such world-class performers as the conductor Pierre Boulez, the mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter, the Emerson String Quartet, the Berlin Philharmonic, and the Chicago Symphony, the last of America's "big five" orchestras to continue to make major-label recordings.

In short, the classical-recording industry as it existed for virtually the whole of the 20th century is in the process of going out of business. And this process, as I also predicted in 1996, is likely to be sharply accelerated as new Internet-based technologies undermine the economic basis for the profitable sale of commercial recordings of classical music.

The decline of major-label classical recording has been widely lamented in the musical press. But what sort of effect will it have on the larger culture of classical music? To answer this question, we need to look back to the invention of the phonograph.[2]

A hundred years ago, the performance of classical music was for the most part a local, even a provincial, phenomenon. Although a few major soloists toured internationally (that is, within Europe), one could hear them "live" only by going to a concert hall or opera house. Larger resident ensembles like symphony orchestras did not travel at all, except to nearby cities.

This relative geographical isolation led to the evolution of distinctive regional styles and techniques.

Terry Teachout, Commentary's *music critic and a contributor to* Time *magazine, is finishing* H. L. Mencken: A Life.

[1] "Record Blues," January 1996.

[2] Very little critical or scholarly attention has been paid to the impact of the phonograph on the culture of classical music. A recent book that addresses the issue in part is Timothy Day's *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History* (Yale, 306 pp., $35.00), on which I have drawn in writing this essay.

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Russian violinists held their bows differently from Hungarians; Italian tenors sang with a cutting edge unknown in England. Symphony orchestras were typically made up of locally trained players whose "accents" coalesced into group styles as identifiable as the bouquet of a wine made from local grapes.

The invention in 1893 of the mass-produced phonograph record changed these circumstances dramatically. To begin with, it created the conditions that made possible the emergence of the international classical "superstar." For the first time in history, it was possible for an artist to be heard—and to make money—by means other than performing before live audiences, one concert at a time. Enrico Caruso, who began recording in 1902, was the first classical musician to win a worldwide following through the sale of his records; thereafter, the major classical labels would play a key role in conferring superstar status on the performers they chose to record. "Until I started making records," the American mezzo-soprano Susan Graham has recently testified, "nobody outside the places where I regularly appeared knew who I was. . . . [T]he only way journalists become interested enough even to write about you is if you start to make records."

In addition, recording breached the walls of mere regionalism. Now it was possible for anyone with access to a phonograph to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra under Leopold Stokowski without traveling to Philadelphia—and to compare it with, say, the Berlin Philharmonic under Wilhelm Furtwängler.

At first, this seemed an unimaginable boon, and for the connoisseur of old records it remains so. Thanks to the phonograph, it is possible for us to *know* how the great artists of yesterday played and sang, rather than having to rely on the impressionistic verbal descriptions of their contemporaries. Caruso, Fritz Kreisler, Nellie Melba, Ignace Jan Paderewski: these great names of the now-distant past remain alive to us today chiefly because of the recordings they made a century ago.

In countless cases, the phonograph also had an immediate and salutary effect on the way artists made music. Never before had musicians been able to study their own playing and singing at leisure, and many of them profited from what they heard. Between 1900 and 1940, classical performers as a group became rhythmically more exact, and less tolerant of wrong notes and flawed intonation.

In time, some performers began to use recordings not merely as a tool for refining already established styles but as a means of developing as yet unformed ones. The producer Walter Legge has left an unusually revealing account of how he would play golden-age recordings for his wife, the German soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, in order to "widen" her "imaginative concept of the possibilities of vocal sound":

> Rosa Ponselle's vintage port and thick cream timbre and noble line; the Slavic brilliance of Nina Koshetz; a few phrases from [Geraldine] Farrar's Carmen . . . all these were nectar and ambrosia for Schwarzkopf's musical appetite. Instrumentalists too: Fritz Kreisler for the dark beauty of tone, his nobility and cavalier nonchalance; [Artur] Schnabel for concentrated thinking over long musical periods, firmly rhythmical, seemingly oblivious to bar lines. From the analysis of what we found most admirable in these diverse models we made our own synthesis.

There is, of course, a problem with using recordings of the past in so analytic a manner: it can lead to the development of an eclectic style lacking in genuine individuality. Fortunately, Schwarzkopf did not begin to work with Legge until after she had been performing in public for nearly a decade, and by that time her artistic personality was strong enough to allow her to profit from the experience. Nevertheless, the trap had been set, and artists with weaker personalities soon began to fall into it, with dire results.

BY THE 1950's, the regional styles of yesteryear were fast becoming extinct, killed off by the deprovincializing effects of recordings, air travel, and the mass emigrations (and mass murders) of World War II. In only a few places, notably Vienna and the Soviet Union, did identifiably regional schools of interpretation continue to flourish.

Yet the 50's were also great years for classical recording, dominated as they were by performers who had grown up under the influence of prewar regionalism while simultaneously taking advantage of the enhanced self-awareness made possible by the phonograph. The German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, the Greek-American soprano Maria Callas, the Hungarian conductors Fritz Reiner and George Szell, the Austrian pianist Rudolf Serkin, the Russian violinists Jascha Heifetz and Nathan Milstein: all combined idiosyncrasy with exactitude in a way that characterized classical music-making in the 50's and early 60's.

These artists, and others like them, were at the center of the superstar system created by the major labels. Though they did not know it at the time, their renditions of the standard repertoire would in many cases come to be regarded as definitive. But the economic exigencies of the industry also demanded regular infusions of new "product." And so, starting in the mid-60's, the major labels began to sign up a generation of very young virtuosos, among them the pianist Daniel Barenboim (born in 1942) and the violinist Itzhak Perlman (born in 1945). These musicians had come along too late to acquire the regional "accents" of the prewar era; instead, they grew up listening to the records

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of the superstars of the 50's. Not surprisingly, their playing, while technically accomplished, was eclectically "international" in style, lacking the inimitable regional tang of a Heifetz or a Serkin.

By the end of the 80's, the price began to be paid. The Heifetzes and Serkins were all gone—but their recordings, made for the most part in high-fidelity stereo, survived them. The invention of the digital compact disc now enabled the major labels to reissue yet again the great standard-repertoire recordings of the 50's, only this time in durable editions whose remastered sound was directly competitive in quality with brand-new recordings. The Barenboims and Perlmans were thus forced to compete head to head with the old masters from whom they had learned their craft—and were found wanting. Increasingly, collectors preferred digitally remastered reissues to more expensive new releases by younger artists. The major labels responded by ceasing to make new recordings of the standard repertoire, a decision that in turn undermined the superstar system they themselves had created.

Today, few classical musicians under the age of forty will have the opportunity to record their Beethoven symphonies, their Chopin sonatas, or their Verdi heroines except—in some cases—for small independent labels that cannot afford to spend money on major promotional efforts. Significantly, the only classical company other than DGG that is now releasing large numbers of newly recorded standard-repertoire CD's is Naxos, an independent label that signs unknown performers and sells their recordings at rock-bottom prices. By thus "commodifying" the standard classical repertoire, Naxos makes money, but not stars.

If the major labels have been severely shaken by these developments, they have not been destroyed—yet. What will finally put them out of business is the Internet. In his recent memoir, Jason Epstein, the former editorial director of Random House, argues that "the book business stands at the edge of a vast transformation" brought about by the ability of the Internet to transmit digital data electronically.[3] Although, as he explains, neither physical books nor bookstores will vanish,

> they will coexist hereafter with a vast multilingual directory of digitized texts. . . . From this directory readers at their home computers may transfer the materials they select to machines capable of printing and binding single copies on demand at innumerable remote sites and perhaps eventually within their own homes.

This technology, says Epstein, will make it feasible for best-selling authors to self-publish their own "e-books" (as the horror novelist Stephen King has already done). It will also facilitate the publication and distribution of less popular books that currently fall between the cracks as publishers seek to maximize short-term profits by concentrating on mass-market titles.

Needless to say, similar technologies can be used to transmit recorded music over the web, and much more easily and efficiently than is currently the case with books. Indeed, very large numbers of computer-savvy teenagers are already accustomed to downloading (and sharing) individual pop songs available in easy-to-store formats like MP3. When high-speed Internet service becomes generally available throughout the U.S., downloading a recording of a symphony or an opera will be simplicity itself.

Several symphony orchestras and a few individual musicians, frustrated by the commercialism of the major labels, are already using the web to distribute self-made CD's. Thus, in addition to recording for DGG with the Emerson Quartet, the cellist David Finckel makes solo recordings in collaboration with his wife, the pianist Wu Han, and markets them exclusively through a web site, www.ArtistLed.com. So far, on top of the cost of recording their own performances, Finckel and Wu Han must pay to have them pressed onto CD's, then mailed to individual buyers. But these latter steps, and the overhead they generate, will be eliminated once it becomes possible to download ArtistLed's recordings directly from the web.

To be sure, few artists will have the patience or the wherewithal to make their own studio recordings. More likely, new middlemen will spring up to meet the demand for such services. In one possible scenario, concert presenters like Carnegie Hall, most of which already have on-site recording facilities, might collaborate with artists and their managers to distribute live recordings over the Internet, using them as a promotional device rather than as a direct source of revenue.

What remains to be seen is whether existing classical labels can operate profitably on the web. In Europe, sound recordings lose copyright protection 50 years after their initial release. This means that by the year 2015, the early-stereo recordings of the standard classical repertoire currently being reissued by the major labels will have entered the public domain, and perfect digital copies can be legally distributed by anybody in Europe who cares to make them available for worldwide downloading.[4] Callas's *Tosca*, Heifetz's Beethoven and Brahms, Herbert von Karajan's Strauss and

[3] *Book Business: Publishing Past, Present, and Future*. For an extended discussion, see Joseph Epstein's article, "Among the Gentlemen-Publishers," on page 32 of this issue—Ed.

[4] The ongoing court battle over Napster, the file-sharing technology that allows individuals around the world to make their MP3 music files available to other Napster users via the web, is centered on the fact that Napster is being used to "pirate" recordings that are under copyright. It is, however, perfectly legal for Napster users to share recordings that have passed into the public domain.

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Sibelius, Glenn Gould's *Goldberg Variations*—all will be up for grabs. Once that happens, it is hard to see how any of the major labels will be able to survive in anything like their present form.

IN THE short term, the collapse of the major labels and the rise of the Internet as a locus for distributing recordings will almost certainly prevent the re-emergence of anything remotely resembling the superstar system of the 20th century. What will the world of classical music look like without it?

One possible answer can be found by looking at classical ballet. Few ballet companies tour regularly, and some of the most important, like the New York City Ballet, are rarely seen outside their home towns; videocassettes, moreover, are a notoriously inadequate substitute for live performances, and thus sell poorly. For these reasons, the major media devote little space to ballet, and there are never more than one or two international superstars at any given moment. Most ballet-goers spend the bulk of their time attending performances by the resident companies of the cities in which they live, and the dances, not the dancers, are the draw—it is *The Nutcracker* that fills seats, not the Sugar Plum Fairy.

In the U.S., regional opera works in much the same way. Only a half-dozen major American companies can afford to import superstars; everyone else hires solid second-tier singers with little or no name recognition, often using local artists to fill out their casts. Audiences are attracted not by the stars, but by the show—that is, by dramatically compelling productions of musically interesting operas.

If the larger culture of classical music were to be reorganized along similar lines, impresarios, instead of presenting a small roster of international celebrity virtuosos, might be forced to engage a wider range of lower-priced soloists, possibly including local artists and ensembles with a carefully cultivated base of loyal fans. Similarly, regional symphony orchestras would have to adopt more imaginative programming strategies in order to attract listeners who now buy tickets mainly to hear superstar soloists play popular concertos in person.

It is possible, too, that with the breakup of the single worldwide market created by the superstar system, we might see a similar disintegration of the blandly eclectic "international" style of performance that came to dominate classical music in the 70's. Performers who play for the moment, rather than for the microphones of an international record company primarily interested in its bottom line, are more likely to play interestingly, and to play interesting music, including new music.

IN THE midst of these uncertainties, one thing is not only possible but probable: henceforth, nobody in his right mind will look to classical music as a means of making very large sums of money.

Of all the ways in which the invention of the phonograph changed the culture of classical music, perhaps the most fateful was that, by turning a local craft into an international trade, it attracted the attention of entrepreneurs more interested in the money than in the art. Of course, there can be no art without money; but the recording industry, by creating a mass market for music, insidiously and inexorably altered artistic priorities.

A 1978 novel, *Aria*, candidly described the internal workings of a major classical label owned by a multinational corporation. (The author, Brown Meggs, had previously run Angel Records, then the American division of EMI.) Its most revealing passage is a drunken confession made by the protagonist, a middle-aged record producer named Harry Chapin, to his seatmate on a trans-Atlantic flight:

> Originally, records were a library function. We would capture for posterity the world's greatest scores as interpreted by fine old gentlemen who had spent lifetimes in determining inner truths. Today we have this enormous, insatiable commercial pipeline to fill. With what? With *product*. Not art—*product*. . . . I am part of the problem. I encourage these long-haired Donnys and Barrys and Dannys and Zubies, who find themselves stepping straight from the conservatory, with their student scores marked up the way their professors told them, directly into the concert hall and recording studio, there to spout back the lessons learned by rote. . . . And I help perpetuate this hoax. I help tell the consuming public, such as it is, that these new records by these new artists—*artists*?—are worthy of permanent encapsulation in vinyl. I help put these unformed fetuses into our museums.

After a quarter-century of Donnys and Barrys and Dannys and Zubies—of crossover artists and the Three Tenors and a hundred different recorded versions of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, each one duller than the last—the classical-recording industry now appears to be on its last legs. Notwithstanding the countless pleasures the major labels have given us in the course of their century-long existence, it seems quite conceivable that the 21st century will be better off without them.

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Books in Review

American Magpie

Moral Freedom:
The Search for Virtue in a
World of Choice
by Alan Wolfe
Norton. 214 pp. $24.95

Reviewed by
Midge Decter

ALAN WOLFE, director of the Boisi Center for Religion and Public Life at Boston College, wanted to know what his fellow Americans think and feel about a number of moral issues in a society that offers them a wide new variety of personal choices. First, he helped devise a nationwide poll on this subject, the results of which were published in a special issue of the *New York Times Magazine*. But the poll did not really get at what Wolfe wanted to find out. For, as he explains in the introduction to this book, nationwide polls seek to represent the distribution of opinion—that is, to express what is typical. Because America is so diverse, however, we should really be looking for people "whose views, we suspect, gravitate toward the extremes." Such views, being so deeply felt, establish "the parameters . . . within which everyone else makes choices."

With this reasoning to guide him, Wolfe set out to supplement the *New York Times Magazine* poll by means of lengthy, in-depth interviews conducted among residents of eight distinct communities: the two homosexual centers of San Francisco, namely, the Castro district for male homosexuals and Noe Valley for lesbians; Atherton, California, home of Silicon Valley multimillionaires; Lackland Air Force base and surrounding areas in San Antonio, Texas; the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, where students tend to be the first in their families to have gone to college; Oakwood, a well-off suburb of Dayton, Ohio; Tipton, a small Iowa town surrounded by farmland; Blue Hills, a black neighborhood in Hartford, Connecticut; and Fall River, Massachusetts, a no longer thriving factory town full of new immigrants.

In each of these places, 25 interviewees spent an hour apiece answering Mr. Wolfe's questionnaire, yielding a voluminous body of material for him to go foraging in. This book records his attempt to digest and organize his findings, a task he addresses in a series of chapters devoted to what his interviewees have to say about, in order, loyalty, self-discipline, honesty, and forgiveness. The book then concludes with two chapters on the inferences Wolfe has been able to draw from his research about American morality in general.

WHETHER OR not they represent the "extremes," Wolfe's respondents seem by and large to be nice people, polite and helpful as Americans tend to be—especially to those who interview them. And this is hardly a surprise: individuals of so many different backgrounds and circumstances could not otherwise live together with the degree of comity that persists in American society. Nor are there any surprises in the views they express about Wolfe's four chosen virtues.

MIDGE DECTER, *a veteran contributor to* COMMENTARY, *is the author of* Liberal Parents, Radical Children. *Her new book,* An Old Wife's Tale, *will be published in September by ReganBooks.*

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Take loyalty. On the whole, the Americans sampled by Wolfe believe in it, even if not in each and every instance. Thus, many profess to feel little loyalty to their employers, except when they know it is reciprocated—something that seldom happens in large corporations that hire and fire employees as financial circumstances dictate. As for loyalty to one's spouse, they all pretty much recognize that this cannot fully be counted on in these days of widespread divorce, but it nevertheless continues to be highly valued, especially by those who are themselves children of divorce.

Then there are those who were once loyal sports fans but find it increasingly difficult to remain so in an era in which teams seem to change their venue, and players their teams, from year to year. (If sports loyalty seems an odd case to have raised in connection with something that should lie as heavily on people's chests as virtue, odder still is Wolfe's scanting of what is surely among the highest forms of loyalty, namely, the feeling of people, especially men serving in the military, who have come to depend on one another for their survival.)

Self-discipline, the second item on Wolfe's list, is also a great virtue in the eyes of his respondents, and a useful one as well. Still, they tend to be forgiving of its lapses in others, at least when it comes to alcohol and drug abuse, which they have some difficulty acknowledging as moral problems rather than psychological ones. Indeed, of all the questions taken up by this group of people, self-discipline seems to have elicited the shakiest response.

Honesty, by contrast, is a virtue no one has the slightest difficulty either endorsing in general or claiming to practice in person. But, except for the Iowans—for whom honesty, or so they claim, comes with no frills—most of Wolfe's interviewees also believe that, as with loyalty, this virtue too is a conditional one. In a variety of circumstances—for instance, telling an acquaintance the truth about his less than attractive appearance, or his less than successful performance—unvarnished honesty can be hurtful to no purpose. There is also a relatively widespread feeling that one need not be honest with those who are not being honest with oneself or who attempt to take advantage of one's good nature.

The last of the issues taken up in this study is forgiveness, a virtue Wolfe declares somewhat arbitrarily to be the opposite of strict justice. Why he chose it is not clear: indeed, although his respondents seem to feel strongly about justice, few of them appear much concerned with forgiveness. But perhaps there is a clue in the very fact that only 24 of the more than 200 interviewees emphasize forgiveness as something people need to feel in order to get over their personal pain at being badly treated, and of these 24, only four are men. Wolfe himself hastens to point out that this comports with what Carol Gilligan has famously said about the difference between male and female moral reasoning—namely, that men tend to emphasize abstract principles of justice while women are more likely to think in personal terms. In short, in including forgiveness among the virtues singled out for discussion, Wolfe may have been making a gentlemanly bow to the distaff side (though, just to complicate matters, it turns out that the more concerned his female correspondents are with women's issues per se, the less likely they are to believe in forgiveness).

IN THE end, as I say, nothing the subjects of this study think or believe should surprise anyone—unless one happens to be among those who inveterately view Americans with dark foreboding. Having been selected for

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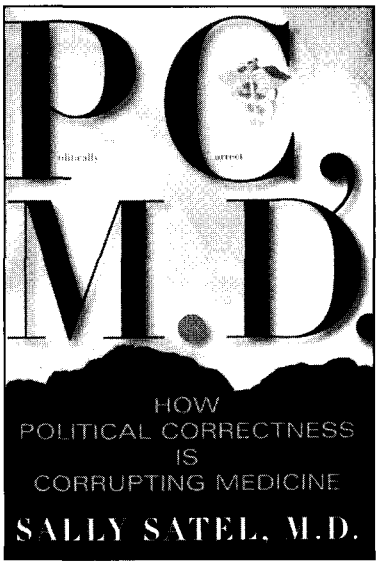

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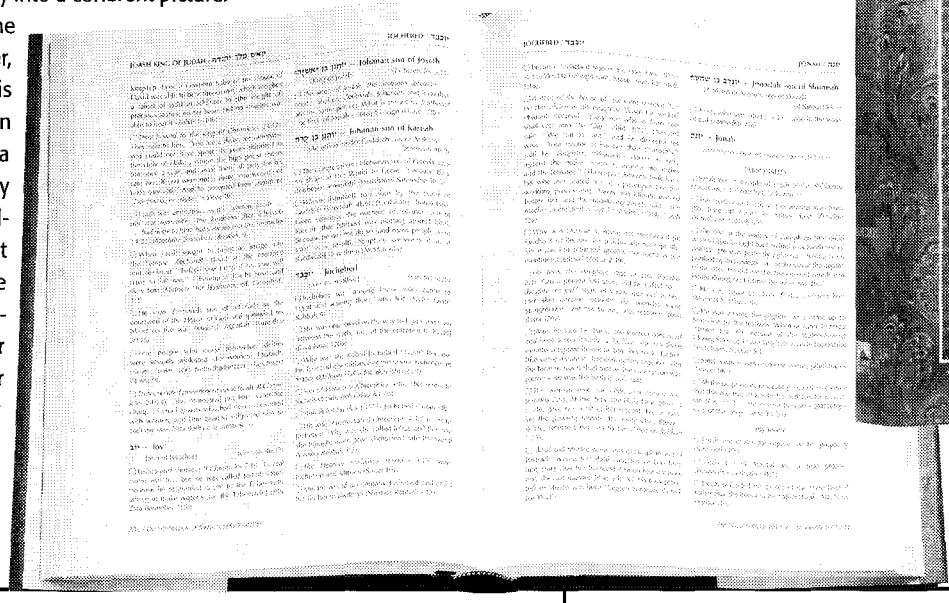

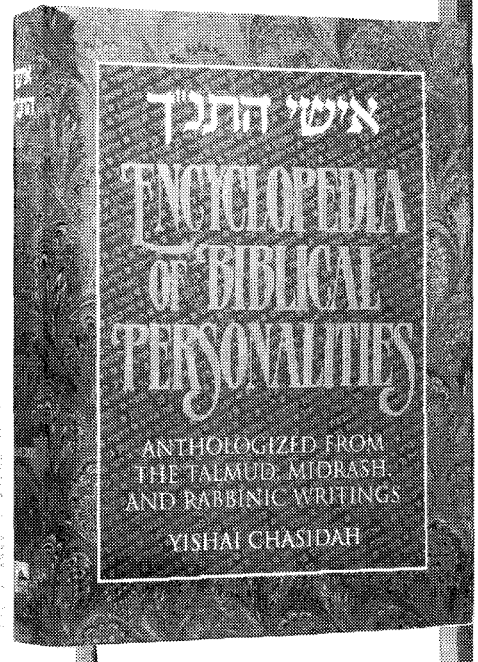
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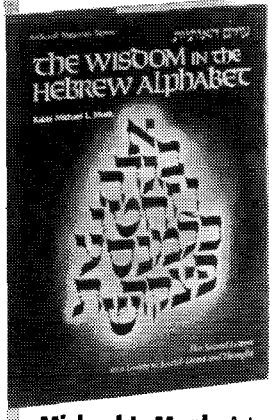

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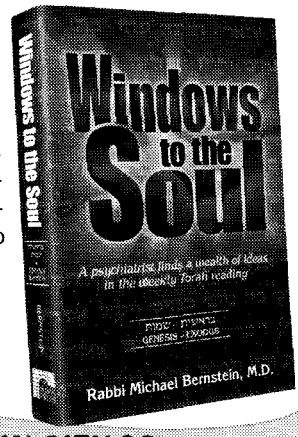

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living in what Wolfe regards as the extremes of society, they turn out to think entirely within the norm, going about their lives in a state of general decency toward their fellow creatures and exhibiting no greater degree of spiritual ignorance than many of the people who make a living devising theories about them.

But this mildly interesting and even mildly reassuring conclusion is not the end of the matter. For what *Moral Freedom* is really about is not the interviewees' take on America, but Alan Wolfe's. Throughout the book, his own views pepper his findings—now and then he even stops to argue with what his respondents profess to feel. Those views are crystallized in the book's final two chapters, "The Moral Philosophy of the Americans" and "The Very Strange Idea of Moral Freedom."

What Wolfe wishes us to understand is that Americans today are living with a historically unprecedented amount of personal freedom; that this freedom offers them choices people have not always had; and that being confronted with so many choices can lead to a fair amount of confusion both about what to think and about how to live. All of which is undeniably true. But it is only a small exaggeration to say that, to judge from this book, few of the confusions exhibited by his interviewees on this score are as great as Wolfe's own.

It is difficult to give a full account of these confusions without reproducing the entire volume. But here, for example, is Wolfe himself on the question of loyalty. "America," he writes,

> has always had something of a peculiar relationship with loyalty, as manifested in our naïve belief that professing an oath of loyalty, upon which so many institutions insisted in the 1950's, somehow settles the question of whether one is truly loyal.

One can only wonder from what ancient-historical grab bag this dusty rag of analysis was extracted. For one thing, the loyalty oaths of the 1950's were over and done with in the 1950's, and were anyway both opposed and despised at the time by the most vocal, and ultimately influential, members of American society. For another, these oaths had to do with an issue of loyalty not a word about which is even breathed in these pages—namely, loyalty to one's country in wartime. To cite them as somehow thematic of a longstanding and "peculiar relationship with loyalty" is itself peculiar in the extreme.

And here is Wolfe, in the same mode, and banging on the same his-

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torical can, on his interviewees' rather humane and also rather complex views of honesty:

> One does not have to be a nostalgic conservative longing for a return to a more wholesome time to recognize that America has had a problem with honesty since at least the late 1950's. It all seemed to begin with President Eisenhower's lying about U-2 flights over the Soviet Union. Then, in rapid succession, the public discovered that quiz shows failed to reveal the fact that contestants were given answers in advance; that radio disc jockeys secretly accepted payments to push particular records. . . .

And so on. Is there not something a little suspect in this citing of a United States President who had—imagine—the gall to lie to the Soviet Union, of all regimes, about our having engaged in military surveillance of its territory? And as for those bad old quiz shows: one can just picture the millions of anguished American mothers who, contemplating them, despaired of the task of teaching their children to tell the truth.

Americans, Wolfe tells us, adopt a merely utilitarian approach to honesty. Well, perhaps—but that does not actually characterize the attitudes his hand-picked group of Americans are quoted as having expressed. Then he invokes Hannah Arendt, Immanuel Kant, and Saint Augustine, among others, to express disapproval of this putative utilitarianism. From quiz shows to Kant: this, such as it is, more or less sums up the arc of Alan Wolfe's moral understanding.

There is no question that today's Americans are both blessed by once undreamed-of wealth and ease and cursed by having been sent off to sail in spiritually uncharted waters. We are living longer, more comfortably, and in better shape than people have ever lived before, and a wide, fascinating, bewildering world is open to us at the flick of a wrist. Each day brings news from the scientists at once promising and frightening: promising, because for all the alleviation of pain and suffering that we have already been granted, it seems that we may be granted even more; frightening, because with these gifts has come an ever greater power to bring down mischief upon our own heads—and more of this kind of power, too, is on the way.

Thus, in part, the burden of moral freedom. But what Alan Wolfe with his magpie observations has shown he fails to understand is that, in truth, moral freedom is something possessed by every human being, now and forever. Whether a person is a slave or a prisoner or a billionaire, a homeless vagabond or a king, his moral conduct remains his own. They can beat and starve and even kill him, but they cannot make him immoral; only he can do that. This kind of freedom is indeed a heavy burden, the burden laid by their Maker only on the shoulders of human beings.

Was it, as some now claim, easier to be a moral person in the past, when societies imposed stricter codes of proper behavior? Who can actually say? Certainly it must have been easier to order one's life in a steady and proper manner in, say, Victorian England; but that is not, by a long shot, the same thing as being morally in charge of oneself. By the same token, there is no doubt that present-day American society provides too many incentives to go to the devil; but the Americans whom Alan Wolfe sought to learn about still give, on the whole, not such a bad account of themselves.

In any case, if a single message can be said to arise out of their responses, it is that, if he really does care about the prospects of moral freedom, the director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life would be better served by giving up the blur of big-think sociology and concentrating his intellectual energies on a project like bringing God back into the public square.

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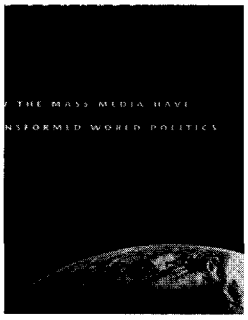

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Writing in the Void

Troublemaker:
The Life and History
of A.J.P. Taylor
by Kathleen Burk
Yale. 491 pp. $35.00

Reviewed by
Richard Pipes

AT THE height of his productive life, from the 1940's through the 1960's, Allan John Percivale (A.J.P.) Taylor was the best known as well as the most controversial of English historians. His fame rested not only on his prodigious bibliography—23 books, over 600 essays and articles, and nearly 1,600 book reviews—but also on frequent appearances on radio and television. His reputation for controversy derived from something else: his habit of expressing opinions that starkly contradicted the consensus and of indulging in eye-catching but often frivolous statements on weighty matters. A highly skilled writer and speaker with an inborn talent for narrative history, Taylor undermined his status by always insisting on being contrary. In the end he had everything he coveted, except the respect of his peers. When he died in 1990, at the age of eighty-four, he was a bitter man, denied the professorship he had yearned for and dismissed by his profession as undeserving of serious attention.

The envy of others undoubtedly played a part in thwarting Taylor's academic career. Professors are notoriously intolerant of colleagues who earn more than they or acquire greater fame, scorning and ostracizing them as "popularizers," "vulgarizers," or, worst of all, "entertainers." Taylor earned exceedingly well and acquired great celebrity. As his meticulously kept accounts indicate (they are reproduced in this book), at the peak of his fame, in the year 1967, he earned £9,441, or in today's terms, over $150,000—this, at a time when the typical British university salary was counted in the hundreds of pounds sterling. In his biographer's estimate, Taylor's lifetime income from writing and lecturing amounted to the equivalent in today's terms of nearly $3 million. In addition, throughout his life he made a great deal of money from investments, financed partly by his earnings and partly by his inheritance.

But as *Troublemaker* makes clear, wealth and celebrity were not the main reason Taylor was rejected by his profession. The main reason had to do with his work as a historian.

TAYLOR DISCOVERED early in life that he had an uncommon talent for public speaking. He could mount a classroom platform and deliver a fluent lecture with minimum preparation and without notes. In time, he attracted huge audiences and became Britain's most acclaimed radio and television personality.

This skill did not serve his scholarship well. Public speaking, especially delivered through the mass media, and serious writing are not natural companions. Speech requires simplification because the human ear is not as retentive as the human eye, and does not accommodate readily the kinds of nuances and qualifications demanded by scholarship. Good speakers, therefore, rarely make good writers. As I can attest from personal observation, Isaiah Berlin, whom few could match

RICHARD PIPES, *Baird research professor at Harvard, is the author most recently of* Property and Freedom. *His many works of history include* Russia Under the Old Regime *and* The Russian Revolution.

Once upon a time, there was a young man named Ken who collected books. Soon, there were so many books, and so little room, that he realized he had to become a bookdealer and move to bigger digs.

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in fluency of speech, agonized over his writing, while Edmund Wilson, an accomplished writer, had an abhorrence of public speaking.

Taylor was good at both, but his writing bore clear marks of rhetorical inspiration. He wrote as he spoke, in measured cadences and balanced oppositions, of which the following, taken from his *English History, 1914-1945*, may serve as an example:

> The British people were the only people who went through both world wars from beginning to end. Yet they remained a peaceful and civilized people, tolerant, patient, and generous. Traditional values lost much of their force. Other values took their place. Imperial greatness was on the way out; the welfare state was on the way in. The British empire declined; the condition of the people improved. Few now sang "Land of Hope and Glory." Few even sang "England Arise." England had risen all the same.

There is nothing wrong with these statements. But the bluntness that captivates the imagination also overrides subtleties in a manner that is troubling in a professional historian.

The more Taylor felt rejected by the profession, the more he provoked it by deliberately shunning scholarly caution. In time, this need to shock became a compulsion, fatally damaging his professional standing. He acquired the habit not just of simplifying complex matters but of tossing out unsound and preposterous opinions. Here are a few:

- In May 1939, he assured the political journalist Malcolm Muggeridge that there would be no war because Hitler would never start one.
- In the course of a televised debate after the war, he asserted that the 1938 Munich agreement signed by the British and French prime ministers with Hitler had been "a triumph for all that was best in British life," a "triumph for all those who had preached enlightenment, international conciliation, revision of treaties, the liberation of nationalities from foreign rule, and so on."
- In 1942, he insisted that after the war, the "peoples of Europe [could] enjoy freedom only under the joint protection of England and Russia."
- In 1946, calling on Britain to dissociate itself from the United States, he asserted that the American economy stood on

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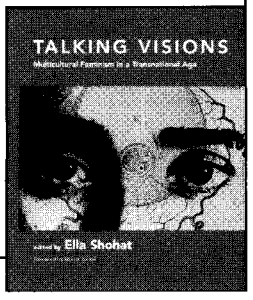

the brink of collapse, while that of the Soviet Union "went from strength to strength."

An outstanding example of Taylor's penchant for aggressive wrongheadedness was his most controversial book, *The Origins of the Second World War*, published in 1961. Here, still another of his shortcomings came into play, namely, his indifference—indeed, his blindness—to the human factor in history.

The narrative of this book reflects Taylor's historical philosophy: that statesmen do not act, but only react. They "are too absorbed by events to follow a preconceived plan. They take one step, and the next follows from it. The systems are created by historians. . . . " Quite apart from the logical absurdity of this idea—since in order to react, someone else must act—as applied to World War II it was so patently wrong that only neo-Nazis and a few honest but misguided souls could be persuaded by it.

It was, in any event, in line with this central proposition that Taylor held that Hitler did not want war, but stumbled into it. Although Hitler did have "strategic goals," he had "no predetermined master plan as to how and when" to reach them; lacking such a precise timetable, he "took opportunities as they arose." From which it followed, as Hugh Trevor-Roper pointed out in a devastating review of *Origins*, "that Hitler was a traditional statesman, of limited aims, merely responding to a given situation."

Taylor's argument set up a straw man, or rather two straw men. On the one hand there is the hypothetical statesman who, knowing always what he wants, pursues his objective without regard to circumstances. On the other hand there is the no less hypothetical statesman who, taking account of circumstances, presumably lacks an objective. Neither model fits reality. To be sure, Hitler improvised, but he improvised to a purpose. Whereas Western leaders largely wanted at all costs to preserve the status quo, Hitler was no less determined to upset it, and to this end he used a combination of blackmail and violence.

Of course, in pursuing his goals, Hitler maneuvered and exploited opportunities as they presented themselves, notably the pusillanimity of England and France and the determination of Stalin to ignite World War II. Of course, if he could have achieved mastery over Europe by peaceful means, i.e., by blackmail alone, he would have done so. (As a contemporary joke had it: "Does Hitler want peace?" "Certainly: a piece of Czechoslovakia, a piece of Poland. . . .") But as he had also made unmistakably clear, he loved war; and when blackmail ceased to work, he felt no hesitation resorting to it.

Hitler stated his objectives plainly in *Mein Kampf*. But Trevor-Roper called attention to the fact that Taylor "hardly ever refers to *Mein Kampf*." The reason, as we now learn from his biographer, was that he had not yet read it when he wrote *Origins*: an omission that caused him to miss the whole ideological and emotional frenzy of National Socialism.

Taylor's neglect of, or refusal to deal with, this aspect of Nazism was rooted in still another feature of his philosophy of history: the postulate that human beings with their ideas and passions are of no consequence. Instead, he viewed historical events as driven by the operations of the balance-of-power principle, a principle that for him, as Kathleen Burk puts it, "worked almost automatically, like the laws of economics." He admitted in moments of candor that he had no interest in the nonpolitical forces that motivated human beings: history was guided by politicians, and politicians were guided by events, and everything else was secondary or irrelevant. In his own words:

> Political history provides the acts of the drama; and the rest—culture, economics, religion, and

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so on—are refreshing interruptions, like drinks at the bar during the intervals.

This blunt, unqualified, and absurd notion underlay Taylor's ignorance of and indifference to everything that lay outside the workings of politics.

Taylor's methodology had its own political aspect. He was born into an affluent family of Communist fellow-travelers who from the moment the Bolsheviks seized Russia in 1917 had enthusiastically supported their cause. Suffice it to say that when his father, whom he adored, died in 1940, the family had the coffin draped in a red flag, "emblazoned with hammer and sickle."

Taylor himself briefly joined the Communist party, leaving it in 1926 for its failure to support the British general strike. He knew little about Russia and showed little interest in learning more, but despite his ignorance—or rather because of it—he consistently expressed admiration for the Soviet Union and its achievements. When in 1932-33 a gruesome famine struck that country, in large part as a result of Stalin's deliberate policies, Taylor, writes his biographer, "only reluctantly admitted that the famine might be a fact, but judged it in any event to be 'irrelevant'; what mattered was the survival of the 'Workers' State.'" Later on, he justified the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939 on the grounds that it was a purely defensive measure and bore no relation to the Nazi attack on Poland that followed within a week. "Both Hitler and Stalin imagined that they had prevented war, not brought it on," he insisted. One hardly knows how to react to such balderdash.

The implied political conclusion of *The Origins of the Second World War* was that just as Hitler had not set out on a course of conquest in the 1930's, neither had Stalin after World War II. The cold war, therefore, rested on a misperception, and a hard line vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was profoundly mistaken. Indeed, in Taylor's opinion Britain should not confront Russia but enter into an alliance with it. As a corollary, Britain should also end its dependence on the United States, and cease serving as America's "economic and military satellite."

The writing of history calls for the same qualities that are required in any other branch of learning: perseverance, objectivity, and, last but not least, imagination. But the historian's imagination is of a special kind, being circumscribed and hence disciplined by facts. He is like a person endeavoring to solve a connect-the-dots puzzle, but with this

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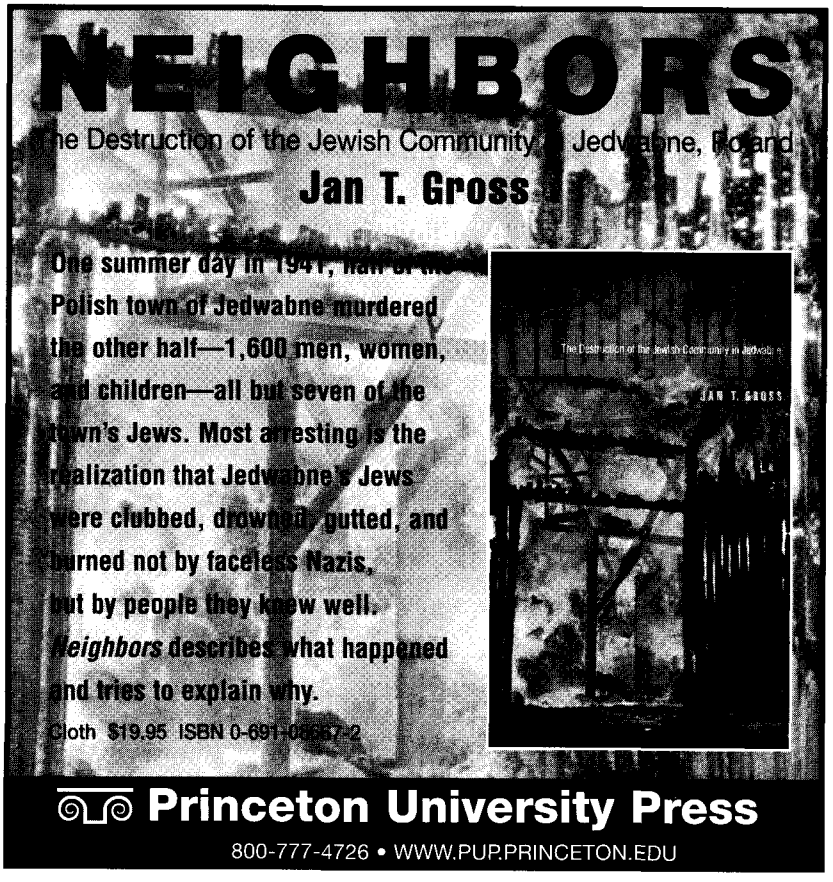
difference: the historian's "dots"—historical facts—are infinite in quantity and can be combined in any number of ways.

Taylor had a natural flair for this kind of work, and he delighted in it. But he treated it as a sport—that is, as an end in itself. He once made the startling admission that in writing history he "was more interested in [the] writing than in the history." Late in life, wondering what he had accomplished, he came up with the paltry formulation that "the first function of the historian was to answer the child's question, 'What happened next?'" *Why* things happened, and what they meant, was presumably beyond his purview.

Had he been able to restrain his ego, Taylor could have been a good historian, but he could never have been a great one. For greatness he lacked moral vision: he was at heart a nihilist. Writing to his third wife in 1972, he confessed: "I've had an empty frivolous life and not done much that I wanted to do, writing in the void without any real belief in anything. . . . I don't like other people much." On another occasion: "When I am asked to contribute to volumes entitled 'What I Believe,' I can only reply: I don't *believe* anything."

Kathleen Burk, who teaches at University College in London, identifies herself as Taylor's last research student. In *Troublemaker* she makes a valiant effort to portray her teacher as a significant historian. But on the basis of the evidence she herself candidly supplies, this is not a feasible task. He simply was not human enough to write convincingly about human beings.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Paradise Park: A Novel
by Allegra Goodman
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Reviewed by
John Podhoretz

THE CHARACTERS populating Allegra Goodman's fiction have been, almost exclusively, hyperarticulate academics or hyper-serious Jews—weighed down, confused, and made rather grand by the knowledge they possess. Writing with an elegance and experience that have belied her shockingly young age (she published her first story, in COMMENTARY, at seventeen and is now all of thirty-three), Goodman has offered equally full-blooded portraits of aged Shavian scholars and young Orthodox women straining against the demands of their increasingly observant communities.

Which makes the turn she has taken in *Paradise Park*, her second novel, all the more fascinating and unexpected. This is an unabashedly comic, first-person account of the life and adventures of one Sharon Spiegelman, hippie folk dancer and seeker of the Divine Spark. The book is a bravura performance, the fictional autobiography of a female Candide on a lifelong quest for enlightenment in an age when enlightenment is particularly difficult to come by.

Sharon is twenty years old when we first encounter her, abandoned in a Honolulu hotel room in the mid-1970's by the politically activist boyfriend she has followed from Boston to Hawaii. When the novel ends, she is forty-one, and back in Boston in her folk-dancing circle like an old-timer returning to the ballpark long after retirement. Along the way, we learn about her remarkable and peripatetic life. From that hotel room she moves to an un-

JOHN PODHORETZ *is a columnist for the* New York Post *and a contributing editor of the* Weekly Standard.

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inhabited island as part of a team studying an endangered species of bird; to the island of Molokai to farm marijuana; to a Baptist church where she briefly accepts Jesus as her savior; to a Buddhist monastery in a suburban neighborhood on Oahu; to a religious community in the Mea Shearim section of Jerusalem. Always she returns to Honolulu, where she subsists by working in various tourist shops, makes an abortive effort at studying in the university, teaches folk dancing at a Reform temple to a group of cheerful but sadly uncoordinated elderly ladies, and suffers through unsatisfying relationships with various men—all the while living in small, smelly rooms in diverse communes and academic group houses.

Finally, Sharon falls in with a young couple who arrange for her to spend a summer at a Hasidic girls' school in Bellevue, Washington. When the summer ends, she follows one of her fellow students back to Crown Heights in Brooklyn, where she embraces life among the Bialystoker Hasidim and finally meets a Russian-born pianist who seems like her *bashert*—her intended, predestined one—were it not for the awkward fact that his mother was not born Jewish.

Paradise Park is a study in the hunger for faith and community that lurks within those too sadly self-involved to surrender themselves to the demands of religious practice or the restrictive standards all communities impose on their members. Sharon lives an extraordinary existence, but the gorgeous and haunting things she experiences never really penetrate the hard shell of her self-absorption. She shares most of her deepest longings with animals—a dolphin at the theme park where she briefly works, a stray cat she takes in who later gets feline AIDS—misinterpreting their inability to speak as a capacity to empathize.

"I really wish I could say I heard a still, small voice," Sharon tells us at the beginning of *Paradise Park* as she ponders her disastrous situation: bereft, alone and broke in Hawaii, unable to turn either to her crazy alcoholic mother or her miserly, distant father back in New England. "But nope. My voice inside of me was more of what I would describe as enraged and terrified yet squeaky, but it kept on talking till I couldn't help listening, and it kept saying—it's not fair!"

Goodman triumphs especially in rendering this foolish, yearning, inarticulate, uneducated, deluded, and yet delicate and heartfelt voice of Sharon's. Here she is in an evangelical Christian church, watching

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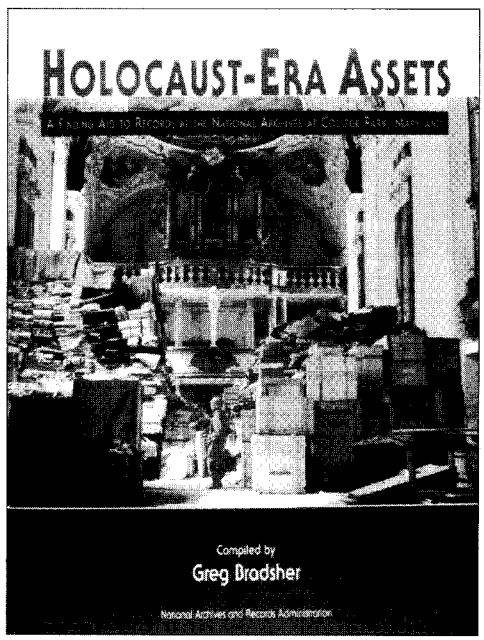

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others accept Jesus into their hearts:

> "Come home," Pastor McClaren said, "Come home. . . ." And there was this feeling in me—this unbelievable longing that made me want to go up there and kneel down and accept Jesus too—but I was afraid, and I did not. I just stood there where I was, I watched everyone and my eyes were full of tears, because it was right, what our pastor said; it was true. It was the most true comment on my own issues that I'd ever heard.

Sharon's sojourn among Christians and Buddhists is relatively short-lived. Though Judaism offends her universalist sensibilities, and though the sum total of her knowledge of her faith and her people is derived entirely from Israeli folk dancing, her Pilgrim's Progress does eventually take her from the Reform temple in Honolulu (on the rabbi's car, the license plate reads "Shaloha") into the embrace of the vital sect of Bialystoker Hasidim. When she meets her young Russian, who believes he has received a portent that the two of them are meant to be together, she seeks out the sect's wonder-working rebbe, to whom she confides, "He's had a sign from God, but yet, I have doubts, since I barely know him, for one thing, which is customary in the community, I understand. . . . To me the whole relationship seems like it's moving way too fast. . . . Should I marry him?" To which the rabbi, exerting all the mystical power at his command, replies by handing her a shiny penny and saying, "*Nu, freg dayne eltern*"—ask your parents.

IF, IN passages like these, Sharon can seem a pale distaff version of Tolstoy's Levin in *Anna Karenina*, hungering for God, two novels more closely resembling *Paradise Park* are Ring Lardner's *You Know Me Al* and Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*—those rollicking comedies of the early 20th century in which inarticulate characters tell their stories unaware that they are the butts of the joke. Like the baseball pitcher in *You Know Me Al* and the gold-digger in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, Sharon Spiegelman is what literary critics call an "unreliable narrator"; the true meaning of her story is unknown to her.

The comparison with Lardner and Loos points, as well, to the glaring weakness of *Paradise Park*. Their books are very, very short, about 150 pages, while Goodman takes 360 pages to tell Sharon's story. As a writer, Goodman is too honest to let Sharon grow very much in the course of the novel, but it is tiresome to spend so much time in the company of a raging egotist, and the result is that, like Sharon herself, *Paradise Park* overstays its welcome. By the time we arrive at the ending, in which Sharon finally finds her modest place in the world, we have lost patience; we wish her well, but are glad to be rid of her.

That is far from true of her author, however. Allegra Goodman's willingness to experiment with new voices, and new ways of telling her brilliantly conceived stories of Jews in conflict with modernity, only makes us hungry for more.

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The Last Wonder-Child

Newton's Gift:
How Sir Isaac Newton
Unlocked the System
of the World
by David Berlinski
Free Press. 217 pp. $24.00

Reviewed by
Adam Schulman

ISAAC NEWTON (1642-1727) belongs without question among the truly great geniuses the human race has yet produced. All the world knows that he discovered the laws of motion and of universal gravitation and developed them systematically in his masterwork, *Principia Mathematica Philosophiae Naturalis* (1687). Yet few today can boast to have read that book, and still fewer to have understood it. Even competent physicists would find Newton's text baffling, in part because his revolutionary insights are formulated and proved by way of an original and peculiar blend of ancient Greek geometry and modern infinitesimal analysis.

As for the nonscientist, the obstacles to reading and appreciating Newton's *Principia* are even more daunting. The steady scientific progress of three centuries is only part of the difficulty. The story goes

ADAM SCHULMAN *is a tutor at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland.*

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that when the *Principia* was first published, John Locke, a contemporary and friend of Newton and the greatest philosopher of his age, tried and failed to penetrate Newton's mathematical reasoning; eventually he gave up, accepting the assurances of another eminent scientist that Newton's results could indeed be trusted. And that was the somber moment in European civilization when the chasm between "the two cultures" first grew unbridgeably wide; henceforth, the great philosophers of the West would have to accept on faith the findings of the great scientists. The prestige of philosophy never recovered from this embarrassing contretemps.

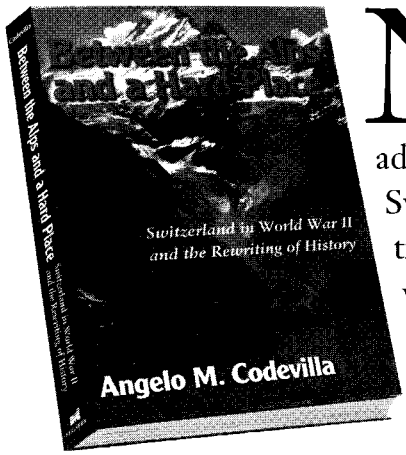
Perhaps no other book shares with Newton's *Principia* the dubious honor of being at once undeniably great and largely unread, not to say unreadable. And yet, for the educated layman interested in taking the measure of Newton the man and Newton the scientist, there could be no better time to be alive than the present. The definitive biography of Newton, by the late Richard Westfall, came out only twenty years ago. Last year saw the long-awaited arrival of I. Bernard Cohen's masterful new English translation of the *Principia*, the first since 1729. And in 1995 no fewer than three excellent books on Newton were published: first-rate monographs by François de Gandt and J. Bruce Brackenridge, and an indispensable guided study of the *Principia* by Dana Densmore. With the aid of these resources it is now possible to delve deeper into the richest veins of Newton's thought than at any time in the last 300 years.

Now we have a new contribution to the literature by David Berlinski, the noted author of *A Tour of the Calculus* and *The Advent of the Algorithm* and a writer on matters scientific in the pages of Commentary. *Newton's Gift* is not quite a biography and not quite a study of Newton's science, but rather something of both. As Berlinski explains, his aim is to offer the reader a sense of the man and an appreciation of what he achieved in the *Principia*. Anecdotes from Newton's life and ruminations on his character and habits are interspersed with expositions of his discoveries, chiefly in mathematics and celestial mechanics. Berlinski does not presuppose much mathematical sophistication on the part of his readers, and he illustrates every technical idea with words, with symbols, and with pictures. The result is a bright and engaging introduction to Isaac Newton that, without breaking new ground, succeeds in conveying a sense of the man while whetting the appetite of the ambitious reader for a more bracing encounter with Newton's formidable achievements.

The idea of universal gravitation—that all the bits of matter in the universe are attracted to one another mutually by a force that varies as the product of their masses and inversely as the square of the distance between them—is now routinely taught to high-school students. Today everyone knows that one and the same force draws heavy objects downward on earth and drives the planets in their elliptical orbits around the sun. Yet prior to Newton, "gravity" simply meant terrestrial heaviness, the opposite of levity, and the orbits of planets were thought to be celestial phenomena of an entirely different order.

Contrary to legend, Newton did not discover universal gravitation in a moment of epiphany while watching an apple fall in his mother's garden in 1666. It is too complex and subtle an idea for that; its achievement cost Newton monumental efforts of intellect and imagination over the course of more than twen-

The Truth about Switzerland



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ty years. Berlinski vividly recounts some of the episodes in that titanic struggle, especially Newton's efforts to tear his mind free of the widely shared fallacy that planets are kept in their orbits by a balance or equilibrium of centripetal and centrifugal forces. Only one force is required, together with the principle of inertia, a profound idea which Newton himself found extraordinarily difficult to conceive and bring forth. Even in the *Principia* we see Newton struggling to express the ideas of force and inertia with clarity and precision.

How well does Berlinski succeed in conveying to the reader a sense of the greatness of Newton's *Principia*? Confronted with its arcane geometrical form, Berlinski chooses to recast Newton's arguments in modern mathematical notation. He largely avoids the core of the *Principia*, the great progression of seventeen propositions leading to the conclusion that orbits in "conic sections" (ellipses, hyperbolas, parabolas) require inverse-square forces, and vice versa. Berlinski also never mentions Apollonius, the ancient geometer whose propositions on conic sections are the indispensable foundation for Newtonian physics.

By passing over the heart of the *Principia*, Berlinski may have saved his readers some mental exertion, but he also gives them only a vague sense of Newton's stunning achievement. Newton's argument is truly inseparable from the manner in which it is expressed. What Newton invented was an unprecedented kind of geometry wherein dynamical quantities—times, velocities, forces—could be represented by straight lines in a figure, and whereby vanishingly small quantities and their ratios could be handled without loss of rigor.

Berlinski leaves readers with the impression that, since Newton discovered the laws of physics and invented (along with Leibniz) the differential and integral calculus, he obviously must have presented his laws of physics in the equations of his calculus. That impression is very widespread but is nonetheless false. Newton expresses his laws of motion in prose and never translates them into symbolic equations (such as $f = ma$). It is a remarkable fact

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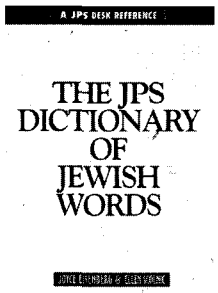

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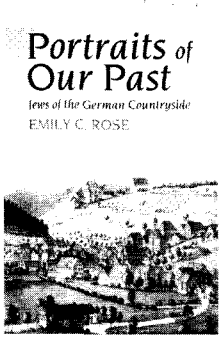

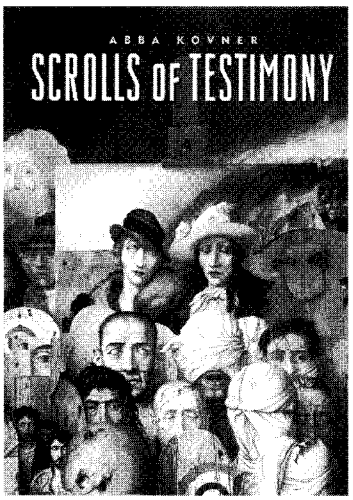

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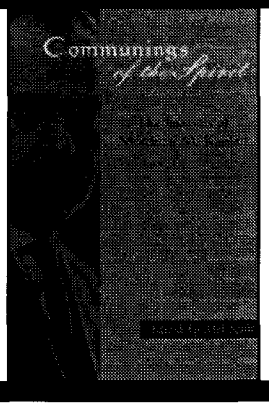

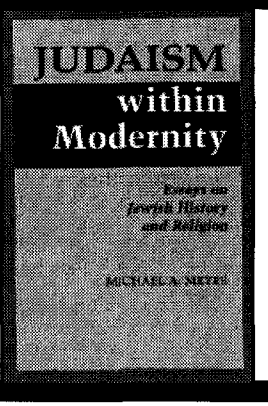

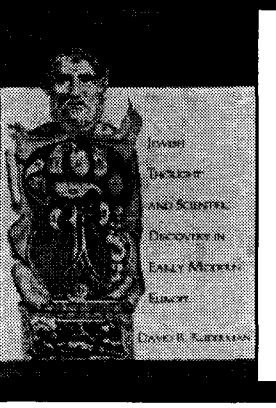

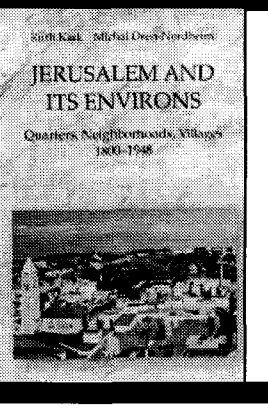

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that, even after Newton's work had been published and his name had become a household word, it took 50 years before another towering figure in the history of physics, Leonhard Euler, had the insight to reduce his Second Law of Motion to a general differential equation soluble by the methods of the calculus. This raises a profound question: how is it that what today seems obvious could have proved so elusive to the luminaries of the past?

As for the man behind the mathematical discoveries, Berlinski manages in a brief space to sketch a compelling portrait. He tells of Newton's humble origins, his difficult childhood, his lonely years as an undergraduate at Cambridge, and the *annus mirabilis* 1665 when, forced by the plague to retire in solitude to the countryside, the twenty-four-year-old Newton proceeded to make astonishing progress in mathematics, optics, and celestial mechanics.

Along with Newton's supreme intellectual gifts, Berlinski nicely captures his peculiar personality: shy, introverted, suspicious, loath to engage in controversy, indignant when challenged, and intensely jealous of his claims to priority of discovery. Berlinski recounts his endless quarrel with Robert Hooke, a respectable scientist far beneath Newton in rank who nonetheless taught him some important lessons and who persistently claimed that Newton had stolen from him the idea of universal gravitation.

Newton's interests extended far beyond rational and celestial mechanics. He devoted years of his life to theological speculation and biblical interpretation and spent countless late nights in laborious alchemical experiments. Berlinski explores these facets of his character with relish. "The great alchemical dream," as Berlinski calls it, was to unlock the secret of the elements so as to transform any substance into any other substance, and especially lead into gold. Newton wrote over a million words on alchemical subjects, most of them unpublished.

This preoccupation with alchemy and mysticism led John Maynard Keynes to remark that Newton was not "the first of the age of reason" but "the last of the magicians," "the last wonder-child to whom the Magi could do sincere and appropriate homage." The genius of Isaac Newton propelled us into modernity, but he himself stood with one leg in the old world and one in the new. *Newton's Gift* is a stimulating introduction to this complex man, whose achievements in mathematics and physics have permanently shaped our world and the way we think about it.

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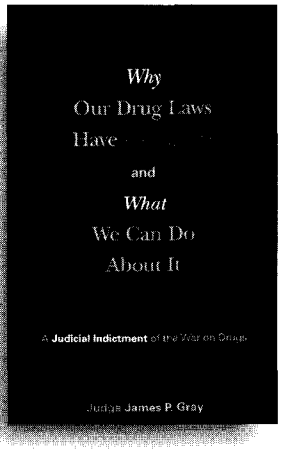

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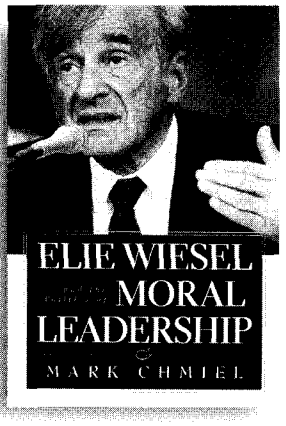

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Happy Meal?

Fast Food Nation
by Eric Schlosser
Houghton Mifflin. 356 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Steven A. Shaw

THE AIRWAVES, editorial pages, and Internet chat groups—not to mention the "Dining In, Dining Out" section of the *New York Times*—are awash in indignation over the revelations contained in *Fast Food Nation*. In a series of meticulous and riveting exposés—ranging from "Why the Fries Taste Good" (artificial flavoring) to "The Most Dangerous Job" (meatpacking)—Eric Schlosser, a correspondent for the *Atlantic*, builds a compelling case against the fast-food industry based on the premise that "the real price never appears on the menu." Then he tells us exactly what he thinks that price is.

The fast-food business, Schlosser's story goes, started innocently enough in the aftermath of World War II as the innovation of a few iconoclasts like Ray Kroc of McDonald's and Carl Karcher of the Carl's Jr. chain, both of whom sought to feed southern California's expanding population in a manner suited to the new automobile culture, and to make a buck in the process. At this stage, Schlosser's admiration for his subjects is evident. But as the fast-food phenomenon spread across the land, driven in large part by the construction of the interstate highway system, things went terribly wrong. Rugged individualism gave way to conformity, and entrepreneurship gave way to corporate hegemony.

Today, argues Schlosser, the fast-food industry is responsible for, or at least symptomatic of, a host of societal ills. Driven by greed, McDonald's and its ilk have created a labor economy dependent on cheap, unskilled, part-time employees, mostly teenagers who cannot easily protect their interests by unionizing. They have also fundamentally transformed the whole spectrum of the American agricultural system, from potato farming to meatpacking, making it into a reflection of their own corporate operations and encouraging the exploitation of family farmers, ranchers, immigrant laborers, and the soil.

Worse, wielding the dual weapons of advertising and political lobbying, the fast-food industry seeks to control our economy, our government, and our very psyches, particularly those of our children. By targeting the young and impressionable—including through insidious advertising in the public schools—these multinational corporations create captive consumers who can be relied upon to pester their parents for unhealthy food and the toy trinkets used to promote it. All the while, companies reveal themselves as the worst kind of hypocrites, trumpeting the free market while covertly lobbying for subsidies and preferential regulatory treatment.

Nor does the litany of evils end there. The industry is, it seems, largely responsible for obesity, for dangerous levels of contaminants in our meat supply, for failing to maintain workplace safety, and for high rates of suicide among cattle ranchers. Through the carefully plotted use of additives, the industry's flavor engineers—flavorists, as they are called—dupe us into enjoying what is essentially flavorless frozen-and-reheated food. And as fast food spreads beyond these shores and throughout the industrialized world, other nations are rapidly falling prey to the same ills.

IT SHOULD come as no surprise to learn that Schlosser profoundly distrusts the capitalist system: this, if anything, is the underlying theme of *Fast Food Nation*. Although he concedes that "the market is a tool, and a useful one," no good, it seems, has ever been achieved by the market except insofar as its impulses have been strictly circumscribed by hard-hitting regulatory schemes.

In this respect, the fast-food companies represent, for Schlosser, the capitalist system run amok, rendering moot the conventional wisdom of supply and demand and making brainwashed addicts of us all. Indeed, Schlosser writes, just as the 20th century was "dominated by the struggle against totalitarian systems of state power," so the present century will be marked by "a struggle to curtail excessive corporate power." He appears to intend the analogy quite exactly: in a chapter on the relationship between Ray Kroc and Walt Disney, there are hints of shared Nazi tendencies.

Unfortunately, to credit this portrait of the fast-food industry as a new evil empire, agribusiness as the reincarnation of Soviet collectivized farming, and capitalism as the new Communism, one must not only discount Schlosser's wild hyperbole but overlook the inconvenient fact that capitalism has been responsible for almost every instance of material good since the industrial revolution. Even Schlosser is compelled to admit that the industry provides gainful employment to many of society's most disadvantaged members, and helps them learn good basic work habits, complaining all the while that its motives in doing so are "hardly altruistic." About that much, at least, he is right: it is on account of profit, not warm feelings, that America's 3.5 million fast-food workers get paid.

It is a pity Schlosser's mind is so relentlessly preoccupied by politics, and a callow politics at that. For as someone who wants to reduce the nation's consumption of fast food, he fully understands that his many top-down proposals in this direction—a ban on advertising directed

STEVEN A. SHAW *is an attorney and food writer in New York. His article, "Mad Cows & Englishmen," appeared in our March issue.*

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"Greater Israel"

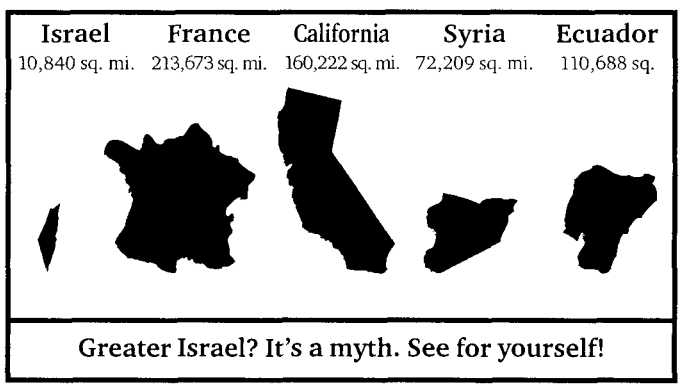
Does it have any relation to reality?

There are strident requests by the Arab countries, by the Palestinians, and indeed by much of the world that Israel should once and for all abandon its dream of a "Greater Israel." Israel's alleged expansionist ambitions have long been a staple of Arab anti-Israel propaganda. But what does it really mean? Does it have any relation to reality?

What are the facts?

Stripes on the Flag. Arab propaganda has it that the two stripes on the flag of Israel, above and below the star of David, represent the Nile and the Euphrates River, respectively, and signify Israel's expansionist desire, to form an "empire" that would supposedly reach from Cairo to Baghdad. But that has no basis in fact, of course. Nowhere in any documents of the Jewish state, in any statement by even the most "radical" spokesman can reference to anything like that be found.

Israel's Borders. "Palestine," part of the Ottoman Empire before World War I, came under British mandate after that war. The Golan Heights were part of Palestine. Israel's current borders are the result of the 1948 War of Independence, in which six Arab armies invaded the new-born state, but were utterly defeated, and the 1967 Six-Day War, in which those same armies once again invaded Israel. In that war, Israel conquered the Gaza Strip, the vast Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. And Israel also *repossessed* the provinces of Judea/Sumaria, (the "West Bank"), and the eastern part of Jerusalem, which had been occupied by the Jordanians nineteen years earlier, when they invaded the just new-born Jewish state. In order to achieve peace with Egypt, Israel returned to it all of the Sinai. Israel is and has always been prepared to grant full autonomy to the Arabs living in Judea/Sumaria. It is clear to all knowledgeable in military matters that, for immutable strategic reason, Israel cannot for any foreseeable future abandon or yield military control of Judea/Sumaria (the "West Bank") and of the Golan Heights.



Greater Israel? It's a myth. See for yourself!

The Myth of Greater Israel. Israel is one of the smallest countries in the world. Most people don't realize how small it really is. One wonders whether those who keep talking about "Greater Israel" and who wish to pressure Israel to divest itself of a big chunk of its territory are aware of it. A look at the map is revealing. Including the vaunted "West Bank," the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights, the entire area of the country is barely over 10,000 square miles. France is twenty times as large as Israel, California fifteen times as large, Syria about seven times as large, and "tiny" Ecuador ten times as large. Israel is so small that its area is less than half the size of San Bernardino County, California; if it were dropped into Lake Michigan it would disappear from sight without a trace. The Arab counties in contrast are huge—they occupy twice the area of the United States. Greater Israel, indeed!

It is clear that the concept of "Greater Israel," lacks any validity and has no basis in fact. To apply such a concept to a country as small as Israel would almost seem a mockery. Obviously, Israel has no territorial ambitions. All it wants is to live in peace within secure and defensible borders, just as any other country and as required under U.N. Resolution No. 242. But it seems that the *size* of Israel, whether "greater" or "lesser" is not at all the concern of Israel's implacable Arab enemies. The very *existence* of Israel, of a Jewish state in their midst of whatever size, is unacceptable to the Arabs. And unless that mindset changes, not until the Arab states have become democracies and have come to full acceptance of Israel, are willing to make *true* peace with it, and are prepared to establish normal and friendly relations with Israel can any possible territorial adjustment be considered. As it looks right now, that may still take some time.

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at children, a new federal food-safety agency, lots more government regulations, and so forth—will only take him so far. If consumers are to alter their behavior, they will have to be offered something better—and they will have to want it.

Schlosser is dimly aware of this conundrum. "Nobody in the United States is forced to buy fast food," he writes in a rare moment of illumination, adding, "The first step toward meaningful change is by far the easiest: stop buying it." But there is the crux of the matter. If customers wanted better-tasting or more nutritious fast food, surely the money-mad corporations would be providing it. But every attempt to create such items (like the McLean Deluxe, made partly from seaweed derivatives) has been an abject failure. Nobody wants to eat them.

In short, fast food does not explain our culture; our culture explains fast food. In his pursuit of corporate perfidy, Schlosser never pauses to consider that the industry itself is just one of the reasons for the fast-fooding of America, which owes its existence to factors ranging from the decline of the family (the enjoyment of good food must be taught by example, beginning in the home), to the entrenchment of career-oriented feminism (it seems almost slanderous today to speak of recipes being handed down from mother to daughter), to the wholesale rejection of the idea of a distinctive American culture, including the (admittedly slender) culinary one.

Of all the arguments against fast food, the strongest and most obvious is the one Schlosser does not and seemingly cannot make: that its popularity represents a failure not of market capitalism but of taste. In fact, he summarily dismisses any such thesis as the carping of elitists. "The aesthetics of fast food," he writes in the book's introduction, "are of much less concern to me than its impact upon the lives of ordinary Americans, both as workers and consumers." And besides, he adds, his populist instincts momentarily getting the better of his anti-capitalist ones, fast food tastes "pretty good."

Well, taken in moderation, fast food is undoubtedly harmless, and only marginally less healthful than the food served at the family-run diners of old. It can also satisfy particular cravings for fat, sugar, and salt. But as compared with what does it taste "pretty good"? This is a question Schlosser is unequipped to answer, and perhaps even to ask, though it would lead to a much more nuanced and interesting discussion of the pros and cons of a fast-food nation. And in the meantime, in the person of the big, evil, multinational corporation, a more convenient target lies at hand.

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Experimenting with Students!

Eric A. Hanushek is the Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow on Education Policy at the Hoover Institution and a member of the Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

Reform of our schools founders on a lack of reliable knowledge. To introduce new programs in schools and to get them funded, programs are typically oversold. This overselling appears in terms of what outcomes can be expected and what evidence supports the program. As a result, school policymakers and the public are frequently disappointed by the results. Although not politically sexy, **correcting the lack of information about program effectiveness should be a national priority.**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the blueprint for the federal policy, is up for reauthorization by Congress. It lacks a coherent strategy for improving our knowledge base. Nothing currently in the bill is likely to do as much for the education of our nation's children as would an extensive program of educational experimentation.

In education, it is common to argue that urgency precludes taking the time to develop an extensive evidentiary base. Moreover, isn't experimentation on kids undesirable, perhaps immoral? Thus, new programs are introduced more on the plausibility of the underlying idea than on evidence about effectiveness in improving student achievement. As a result, the typical high school senior today achieves at essentially the same level as the high school senior of 1970 even though real spending per student is up more than 80 percent.

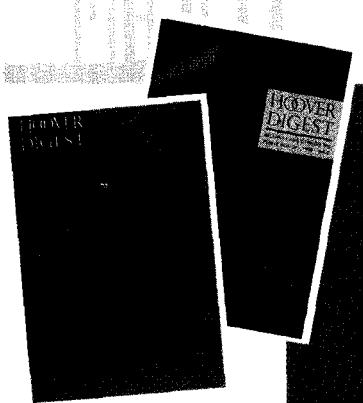
Education research grounded in basic scientific principles is rare. At a basic level, most research fails to look at any objective measures of student outcomes or what causes what. For example, if we were interested in knowing the effect of a reading program designed for disadvantaged learners and we simply compared achievement of those in the program with those not in the program, we would have difficulty inferring the effectiveness of the program itself. The students in the program are selected for it because they need extra help. So are the differences in student performance a reflection of the program or the underlying selection mechanism?

An appealing way to circumvent such problems is to employ a random-assignment experiment, where students are placed into a program by chance. The extensive and informative social experimentation in the 1970s—including welfare, housing, and health insurance—has strongly influenced current policy. Medicine and agriculture have made dramatic strides through random-assignment experimentation. In education, only one experiment can be located (class-size reduction in the mid-1980s under Tennessee's Project STAR), with continuing controversy about its implications. Instead of designing experiments to resolve the policy dilemma, states across the country have simply followed California's example of rushing in with full-blown and expensive programs—never facing up to the possibility that nothing might happen to student achievement.

The fact is that schools are continually experimenting with students, although it is not called that and it lacks an evaluation component. **We should experiment more systematically across a range of reform areas so that we can improve our knowledge base.** A strategy for systematic innovations in the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act could be revolutionary.

— Eric A. Hanushek

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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A world of ideas on public policy.

Partnerships offer hope in sub-Saharan Africa

By Dr. Henry A. McKinnell

The healthcare crisis in sub-Saharan Africa is one of the great human tragedies of our lifetimes. The magnitude of this crisis has led to a valuable debate on how best to provide healthcare to those suffering from the epidemics that are ravaging that region. The key is partnership. Through partnerships, we can replace the destructive cycle of poverty and disease with a virtuous cycle of investment and health. To do so requires a new model of cooperation among governments, private industry and nongovernmental organizations.

Each partner has a critical role to play. From national governments, for example, partnerships derive their political will. In South Africa, President Mbeki's government provides political will to support Pfizer's Diflucan program, a novel public/private alliance to ease the suffering of AIDS patients. In Botswana and Senegal, Merck has formed a partnership with the Harvard AIDS Institute and the Gates Foundation to promote AIDS prevention and expand access to care; and in the Accelerating Access Initiative, a group of pharmaceutical companies have joined with UN agencies, the World Bank and governments to provide AIDS/HIV prevention, care and treatment in Senegal and Uganda.

Political will finds expression in more than a willingness to forge new alliances. It is also evident in the creation of an economic and social climate where innovation can take root and flourish, including the protection of private and intellectual property. Facing large-scale medical emergencies, some governments have been tempted to seize the patents that drug companies hold to their discoveries, and assign those rights to others. This practice – known as "compulsory licensing" – has longer-term consequences that are highly destructive. If governments weaken intellectual property rights in this way, they risk undermining both the ability and willingness of pharmaceutical companies to discover new cures and treatments. They also discourage the technology transfer that is essential to raise the quality of healthcare in the developing countries.

> ***We can replace the destructive cycle of poverty and disease with a virtuous cycle of investment and health.***

Governments in the developed world have an equally important role to play through "burden-sharing." The richer countries, by agreeing to pay a fair share of the costs of innovation in the marketplace, can make it possible for drug companies to provide products affordably in the poorer regions. Governments, therefore, must choose policies wisely, with an eye to the short-term and long-term benefits of their citizens and the global impact of their actions.

If governments provide the will, the private sector provides the way, securing expanded access to resources. These resources include not only medicines, but also the tools of prevention and education.

The role of NGOs and agencies is to provide needed expertise and capabilities, particularly at the field level. From these organizations, our partnerships draw expertise for improving and expanding medical infrastructure, and accurately measuring results.

As a prime example, the International Trachoma Initiative – funded by Pfizer, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – seek to eliminate the world's leading cause of preventable blindness. The donation of Pfizer's antibiotic Zithromax is only one facet of this broad-based campaign. This is not an isolated program. Since 1996, research-based pharmaceutical companies have committed more than $1.2 billion to long-term programs to fight diseases in sub-Saharan Africa and in other less-developed areas.

These partnerships are not the perfect solution, but they point the way, and their potential can be greatly magnified, given that we are entering a golden age of pharmaceutical research. Over the past two decades, drug companies have invested billions in R&D programs to discover more than forty new medicines and new indications aimed at the diseases that plague sub-Saharan Africa. Many more are on the way. A survey of pharmaceutical companies in late 2000 found 103 AIDS drugs either in clinical trials, or awaiting FDA approval. These medicines will bolster the 64 existing treatments. In 1987, there was only one.

In ensuring access to these new medicines, the watchword should be "partnership," with governments and industry ready to show that access and innovation are not antithetical concepts. It is time to expand our partnerships to a wider range of governments, companies, NGOs, and others committed to global health. Together, we can and must confront humanity's killers.

Dr. Henry A. McKinnell is President and CEO of Pfizer Inc. This article is adapted from his remarks at the 2001 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

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